



## INTRODUCTION

The reading and written composition sections of the TAKS English language arts test are based on three thematically linked reading pieces, called a “triplet”—a literary selection, an expository selection, and a visual representation. The test includes two performance tasks: three short answer reading items and a written composition. The literary and expository selections are published pieces, and the visual representation is a created piece, although it may include some published elements, such as photographs. Using published selections on TAKS makes the assessment more authentic and, therefore, a more valid and reliable measure of student learning in reading at the high school level.

### Short Answer Items

The three short answer items on each test assess two skills. First, students must be able to generate clear, reasonable, thoughtful ideas or analyses about some aspect of the published literary and expository selections. Second, students must be able to support these ideas or analyses with relevant, strongly connected textual evidence.

On each test one short answer item is based on the literary selection only (Objective 2), one is based on the expository selection only (Objective 3), and one is based on students’ ability to connect the literary and expository selections (also Objective 3). Short answer items are not used to measure Objective 1, since this objective focuses on basic understanding.

#### **Objective 2**

**The student will demonstrate an understanding of the effects of literary elements and techniques in culturally diverse written texts.**

To appreciate the literature they read in high school, students must develop an understanding of the literary elements that are at the heart of all stories. This understanding must go beyond mere identification to encompass the ways in which the parts of a story, singly and in combination, contribute to its overall meaning. Students must also understand the ways in which an author uses literary techniques and language to craft a story. In short answer items assessing Objective 2, students must write a short response analyzing how literary elements, literary techniques, or figurative language function in a story.

#### **Objective 3**

**The student will demonstrate the ability to analyze and critically evaluate culturally diverse written texts and visual representations.**

To read well at the high school level, students must go beyond their initial understanding or impressions of a selection. Students must be able to develop their own interpretations, make thoughtful judgments about what they read, examine how a selection relates to their own lives, and find meaningful connections across parts of a single selection or between two selections. Students must also be aware of the way an author crafts a selection. An author’s purpose for writing, organizational decisions, point of view or attitude toward the subject, and unique use of language all affect the way a reader reads and understands a selection. In short answer items assessing Objective 3, students must write a short response analyzing or evaluating some aspect of the expository selection or some aspect of text common to or based upon both selections.

TAKS short answer items are holistically scored on a scale of 0 (insufficient) to 3 (exemplary). For each score point, this scoring guide presents the rubric as well as four student responses with explanatory annotations. Using this scoring guide will help you to better understand not only your students’ reading development but also the strengths and weaknesses of your school’s reading program.

## Written Composition

Writing is a life skill. As students move from grade to grade, writing skills are critical for academic progress. Students who have difficulty putting their thoughts into writing struggle to succeed in social studies, science, and many areas other than English language arts. Because good writing requires good thinking, the act of writing helps students learn to clarify their thoughts and focus their ideas.

The writing prompt is thematically linked to the three reading selections. In this way, students have a built-in context that they may draw from as they plan their compositions. Note, however, that while students may include an analysis or reference to one or more reading selections, this is not a requirement. Students may respond to the prompt in any way they choose.

The composition section of the TAKS English language arts test assesses the knowledge and skills grouped under Objectives 4 and 5. Objective 4 focuses on the quality of the composition's content, while Objective 5 focuses on how clearly and effectively the student communicates his or her ideas. These objectives are inextricably linked because good writing must be both substantial and mechanically sound.

### Objective 4

**The student will, within a given context, produce an effective composition for a specific purpose.**

The ability to communicate thoughts and ideas through writing helps students become successful, not only in school but throughout their lives. In order to communicate effectively, students must organize and develop ideas in a logical, coherent, and interesting manner that is easy for the reader to follow and understand. Objective 4 tests each student's ability to produce an organized and well-developed composition in response to a prompt. The prompt is worded so that students have broad latitude in crafting an individual response. Students can use any organizational strategy that allows them to write an effective piece—they can write a story, a description, a philosophical piece, an expository piece, a response to reading—or they can combine approaches. However students choose to respond, it is important that the composition they write is uniquely theirs—that it is authentic and represents their best thinking and writing.

### Objective 5

**The student will produce a piece of writing that demonstrates a command of the conventions of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure.**

To write well, students must be able to apply the conventions of the English language. First, when students write a composition, they are able to follow the rules of correct capitalization, punctuation, spelling, grammar, usage, and sentence structure. Second, they are able to write effective sentences and use words and phrases that enhance the reader's understanding of their ideas. Although students are not expected to produce absolutely error-free writing on the test, they are expected to write as clearly and correctly as possible. The stronger the writing conventions are, the more likely it is that students will be able to produce an effective composition.

TAKS compositions are holistically scored on a scale of 1 (ineffective) to 4 (highly effective). For each score point, this scoring guide presents the rubric as well as four student compositions with explanatory annotations. Using this scoring guide will help you to better understand your students' writing development and the strengths and weaknesses of your school's writing program.

*In his novel Hatchet, Gary Paulsen relates the adventures of Brian, a teenager who is the only survivor of a small plane crash. Until his rescue Brian has to use his wits and stay alive in the Canadian wilderness. In this excerpt from the novel Brian's Return, Brian willingly returns to the wild.*

# Brian's Return

*by Gary Paulsen*

1 Brian awakened just after dawn, when the sun began to warm the tent. The sky was cloudless. He flipped the canoe, and when he went to lower his packs he saw the bear tracks.

2 One bear, medium size. It had come in the night so quietly that Brian hadn't heard it—though he had slept so soundly his first night back in the woods, the bear could have been tipping garbage cans.

3 It had done no damage. The tracks went by the fire, then moved to where he'd buried the fish leftovers. The bear had dug them up and eaten them. It had moved to the tent, apparently looked in on him, then gone to the packs. Brian could see that it had tried to stand and reach them. There were claw marks on the tree but the bear had never figured out the rope holding the packs and had gone off without doing anything destructive.

4 "Company," Brian said. "And I didn't even wake up."

5 He slid the canoe into the water at the edge of the lake and loaded all his gear, tying everything in. He took time to gather some bits of wood and leaves to use as a smudge in a coffee can to fend off mosquitoes, then jumped in. It was still early but already warm, and he quickly stripped down to shorts.

6 He kept the map in its clear plastic bag jammed beneath a rope in front of him. He knelt to paddle instead of sitting on the small seat because it felt more stable. He was not as confident in the canoe as he wished to be. He'd taken it to a small lake near home to practice and rented canoes in other places, but he was very conscious of the fact that he had much to learn. By staying low and on his knees he had much more control.

7 He had only a mile to go in the present lake and then he would enter the river. He had the compass in one of the packs but didn't truly need it. The lakes were well drawn on the map and he could see where the river flowed out.

8 All that day he felt as if he were in a painting, a beautiful private diorama. He worked through a sheltered narrow lagoon and then out into the open to cross a small

My notes about what I am  
reading

lake, then back under the canopy through the still water.

- 9 He had never had a day pass so quickly nor so beautifully and he nearly forgot that he had to find a camp and get some food before dark. He wasn't sick of boiled fish and rice yet, so in the late afternoon he took time to move back along the lily pads and drop the hook over. He caught a large sunfish immediately and took three more small ones, dropping them all over the side using a short piece of nylon rope as a stringer, running the nylon through their gills and out their mouths.
- 10 He took his time looking for a campsite and picked one on a flat area five or six feet above the surface of the lake. It was a clearing about 20 yards across. There were many such clearings, probably all made by beaver cutting down the small trees years before, allowing the grass to take over.
- 11 Brian pulled the canoe well up onto the grass and for no real reason tied a piece of line from the boat's bow to a tree.
- 12 Later he would wonder at this bit of foresight. He had not done it the night before, and since this site was higher he wouldn't have thought he'd need to secure the canoe here.
- 13 The storm hit in the middle of the night.
- 14 It was not that there was so much wind—certainly not as much as he'd been through before with the tornado when he was first marooned in the wilderness—and not that there was so much rain, although there was a good amount of it.
- 15 It was a combination of the two.
- 16 He had cooked dinner and eaten, boiled water for the next day's canteen, pulled his packs up in a tree, set up the tent and arranged his sleeping bag and weapons. Then he'd sat by the fire and written to his friend Caleb about the day in one of his journals, using tiny writing so he wouldn't waste the pages. He would have to give the letters to Caleb when he saw him again—there was no mailbox out here.
- 17 When he was done he put the book back in a plastic bag and crawled inside the tent to go to bed.
- 18 He was awakened by a new sound, a loud sound. Not thunder—it never did thunder or lightning—and not the train-like roar of a tornado. This just started low, the hissing of rain driven against the tent. He snuggled back in his bag. He was in a good shelter—waterproof—let it rain.
- 19 Except that it *kept* coming and kept coming. It went from a moderate rain to a downpour and finally to an outright deluge. And with the rain came wind. Not violent, but enough to break off branches and push the rain still harder. Soon Brian found his bag wet as the rain came in

under the tent. He lifted the flap to look out but it was far too dark to see anything

- 20 And it rained harder. And harder. The wind pushed stronger and still stronger and at last the tent seemed to sigh. It collapsed around him and he started rolling across the grass toward the edge of the clearing.
- 21 Everything was upside down, crazy. He couldn't find the entrance and about the time he thought he had it, the tent dropped off the five-foot embankment and he rolled down to the lakeshore.
- 22 He landed in a heap and felt an intense hot pain in his left leg at the upper thigh and reached down to feel an arrow shaft protruding from his leg.
- 23 *Great, he thought. I've shot myself in the leg.* He hadn't, of course, but had rolled onto an arrow that had fallen out of the quiver just as the tent rolled off the embankment.
- 24 He couldn't get his bearings, but he knew where his thigh was and grabbed the arrow and jerked the shaft out of his leg. There was an immediate surge of pain and he felt like passing out. He didn't, but then he heard a strange *whump-thump* and something crashed down on his head. This time he did pass out.
- 25 He came to a few seconds later with a sore head, a sore leg and absolutely no idea in the world what was happening to him. He was still wrapped in the tent and his bag was in his face and his bow and arrows lay all around him and he seemed to be in water, almost swimming.
- 26 *All right, he thought, take one thing at a time. Just one thing.*
- 27 *I poked my leg with an arrow.*
- 28 *There. Good. I pulled the arrow out. My leg still works. It must not have been a broadhead because it didn't go in very deep. Good.*
- 29 *My tent collapsed. There. Another thing. I'm in a tent, and it collapsed. I just have to find the front zipper and get out and climb up the bank. Easy now, easy.*
- 30 *Something hit me on the head. What? Something big that thunked. The canoe. The wind picked up the canoe, and it hit me.*
- 31 *There. I've poked my leg, rolled down a bank and been hit in the head with the canoe.*
- 32 *All simple things. All fixable things.*
- 33 He fumbled around and at last found the zipper at the front of the tent, opened it and slithered out into the mud on

the lakeshore.

- 34 The rain was still coming down in sheets, the wind still hissing and slashing him with the water, but he had his bearings and it was not impossible to deal with things.
- 35 He dragged the tent back up the embankment onto the grass, limping as the pain in his leg hit him.
- 36 It was too dark to see much, but he could make out the shape of the canoe lying upside down. It had moved a good 10 feet from where he had left it, and had he not tied it down loosely with the line it would have blown away across the lake.
- 37 He had forgotten the most important thing about living in the wilderness, the one thing he'd thought he would never forget—expect the unexpected. What you didn't think would get you, would get you. Plan on the worst and be happy when it didn't come.
- 38 But he had done one thing right: He had tied the canoe to a tree. He dragged the tent to the canoe, crawled underneath and lay on the tent the rest of the night, listening to the rain, wincing with the pain in his leg and feeling stupid.
- 39 It was a long night. The next day was a repair day both for the equipment and for himself.
- 40 Dawn was wet and dreary and it took him a full hour to find dry wood and leave and get a decent fire going—all the time castigating himself. Had he forgotten *everything*? He hadn't made a secure camp, hadn't brought in wood so he'd have dry fire starter in the morning.
- 41 He limped through the woods around the campsite until he found a dead birch log with the bark still intact. Birch bark was nearly waterproof—it was what American Indians used for canoes—and beneath the bark he broke off slivers of dry wood. He took a double armful of bark and slivers back to the campsite and after three attempts—he should have needed only one match, he told himself—he at last got a sputtering flame going.
- 42 Once the bark caught it went like paper dipped in kerosene. When the flames were going well he put on smaller pieces of the wet firewood. The flames dried the wood and started it burning, and in another half hour he had a good blaze going.
- 43 He took a moment then to examine his leg. There was a clean puncture wound not more than half an inch deep. He took some disinfectant from the first-aid kit and dabbed it on the hole, put a Band-Aid on it and then went back to work.
- 44 The wind had dropped and the rain had eased to a few

sprinkles now and then. He saw clear holes in the clouds. He spread the gear to dry. His sleeping bag was soaked, and the tent was a sloppy mess.

45 He had to stay put, so he set the tent back up, this time pegging it down and using the small shovel to dig a drainage ditch around the sides with a runoff ditch leading down to the lake.

46 The wind had tangled the packs in the tree limbs, but they were still intact. With effort, Brian lowered them to the ground.

47 Again he dried arrows and the quiver and checked his bow. Then he launched the canoe and took about 15 minutes to catch six good-size bluegills.

48 He cleaned the fish, put them on to boil with a teaspoon of salt, put rice in the other pan and then suddenly found that all the work was done.

49 The sun was out—he could actually see steam coming up from his sleeping bag as it dried—and he lay back on the ground by the fire and went over what had happened. His leg throbbed in time with his thoughts as he learned yet again: Never assume anything, expect the unexpected, be ready for everything all the time.

50 And finally, no matter what he *thought* would happen, nature would do what it wanted to do. He had to be part of it, part of what it was really like, not what he or some other person thought it should be like.

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# On Willow Creek

by Rick Bass

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1 It's hard in this day and age to convince people of just how tiny and short-lived we are, and how that makes the wild more, not less, important. All of the hill country's creatures had helped me in this regard. It was along Willow Creek where as a child of nine or ten I had gone down with a flashlight to get a bucket of water. It was December, Christmas Eve, and bitterly cold. In the creek's eddies there was half an inch of ice over the shallow pools. I had never before seen ice in the wild.

2 I shined my flashlight onto that ice. The creek made its trickling murmur, cutting down the center of the stream between the ice banks on either side, cutting through the ice like a knife, but in the eddies the ice was thick enough to hold the weight of a fallen branch or a small rock, a piece of iron ore.

3 There were fish swimming under that ice! Little green perch. The creek was only a few yards wide, but it had fish in it, living just beneath the ice! Why weren't they dead? How could they live beneath the surface of ice, as if in another system, another universe? Wasn't it too cold for them?

4 The blaze of my flashlight stunned them into a hanging kind of paralysis; they hung as suspended mobiles, unblinking.

5 I tapped on the ice and they stirred a little, but still I could not get their full attention. They were listening to something else—to the gurgle of the creek, to the tilt of the planet, or the pull of the moon. I tapped on the ice again. Up at the cabin, someone called my name. I was getting cold, and had to go back. Perhaps I

left the first bit of my civility—my first grateful relinquishing of it—there under that strange ice, for the little green fish to carry downstream and return to its proper place, to the muck and moss beneath an old submerged log. I ran up to the cabin with the bucket of cold water, as fresh and alive as we can ever hope to be, having been graced with the sight and idea of something new, something wild, something just beyond my reach.

I remember one winter night, camped down at the deer pasture, when a rimy ice fog had moved in, blanketing the hill country. I was just a teenager. I had stepped outside for a moment for the fresh cold air; everyone else was still in the cabin, playing dominoes. (Granddaddy smoked like a chimney.) I couldn't see a thing in all that cold fog. There was just the sound of the creek running past camp; as it always has, as I hope it always will.

7 Then I heard the sound of a goose honking—approaching from the north. There is no sound more beautiful, especially at night, and I stood there and listened. Another goose joined in—that wild, magnificent honking—and then another.

8 It seemed, standing there in the dark, with the cabin's light behind me (the *snap! snap! snap!* sound of Granddaddy the domino king playing his ivories against the linoleum table), that I could barely stand the hugeness, the unlimited future

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of life. I could feel my youth, could feel my heart beating, and it seemed those geese were coming straight for me, as if they too could feel that barely controlled wildness, and were attracted to it.

9        When they were directly above me, they began to fly in circles, more geese joining them. They came lower and lower, until I could hear the underlying readiness of those resonant honks; I could hear their grunts, their intake of air before each honk.

10       My father came out to see what was going on.

11       “They must be lost,” he said. “This fog must be all over the hill country. Our light may be the only one they can see for miles,” he said. “They’re probably looking for a place to land, to rest for the night, but can’t find their way down through the fog.”

12       The geese were still honking and flying in circles, not a hundred feet over our heads. I’m sure they could hear the gurgle of the creek below. I stared up into the fog, expecting to see the first brave goose come slipping down through that fog, wings set in a glide of faith for the water it knew was just below. They were so close to it.

13       But they did not come. They circled our camp all night, keeping us awake; trying, it seemed, to pray that fog away with their honking, their sweet music; and in the morning, both the fog and the geese were gone, and it seemed that some part of me was gone with them, some tame or civilized part, and they had left behind a boy, a young man, who was now thoroughly wild, and who thoroughly loved wild things. And I often still have the dream I had that night, that I was up with the geese, up in the cold night, peering

down at the fuzzy glow of the cabin lights in the fog, that dim beacon of hope and mystery, safety and longing.

The geese flew away with the last of my civility that night, but I realize now it was a theft that had begun much earlier in life. That’s one of the greatest blessings of the hill country, and all wildness: it is a salve, a twentieth-century poultice to take away the crippling fever of too-much civility, too-much numbness.

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# **SHORT ANSWER ITEMS**

Rubrics and Sample Responses

## **Objective 2 – Literary Selection**

- 29 What is one conflict that Brian faces in “Brian’s Return”? Support your answer with evidence from the selection.

## READING RUBRIC—LITERARY SELECTION OBJECTIVE 2

### SCORE POINT 0 — INSUFFICIENT

In **insufficient** responses, the student

- may offer an incorrect theme, character trait, conflict, or change
- may offer a theme, character, conflict, or change that is too general or vague to determine whether it is reasonable
- may incorrectly analyze a literary technique or figurative expression
- may offer an analysis that is too general or vague to determine whether it is reasonable
- may present only a plot summary
- may not address the question in any way or may answer a different question than the one asked
- may offer only incomplete or irrelevant textual evidence

In addition, insufficient responses may lack clarity.

**Evidence may consist of a direct quotation, a paraphrase, or a specific synopsis.**

RG-1

29 One conflict Brian faces is that he is the only survivor of a small plane crash and is lost in the wild. Brian has to survive on his own and use his knowledge to stay alive.

**Score Point: 0 – Insufficient**

In this response the student provides a paraphrase of the explanatory paragraph that introduces “Brian’s Return” but does not actually address a conflict within the story.

RG-2

29 One of Brian's conflicts is that he is scared. He flipped his canoe and saw some bear tracks. He was scared of the bear a lot so he left in his canoe.

**Score Point: 0 – Insufficient**

This student presents an idea (he is scared) that is not a clear conflict in the story. The student attempts to support this idea with text that either does not exist (flipped his canoe, was scared of the bear . . .) or is not relevant (saw some bear tracks).

RG-3

29 He is in the wilderness by himself and he has to cook, catch and eat his own food. Another conflict was that it was very rainy, cold and he was lonely. These facts were in the passage.

**Score Point: 0 – Insufficient**

The student attempts to respond to the question, but the ideas presented (in the wilderness by himself...) either do not address the conflict or are too general (it was very rainy, cold...) to discern whether they are reasonable.

RG-4

29 Brian faces a major conflict with the weather, he has to find a way to survive in a different climate that he is not used to.

**Score Point: 0 – Insufficient**

In this response the student offers a conflict that is too general (the weather), and the attempt to expand upon this idea (he has to find a way to survive in a different climate...) is not reasonable.

## **READING RUBRIC—LITERARY SELECTION**

### **OBJECTIVE 2**

#### **SCORE POINT 1 — PARTIALLY SUFFICIENT**

In **partially sufficient** responses, the student

- may offer a reasonable theme, character trait, conflict, or change but provide only general, incomplete, or partially accurate/relevant textual evidence or provide no textual evidence at all
- may offer a reasonable analysis of a literary technique or figurative expression but provide only general, incomplete, or partially accurate/relevant textual evidence or provide no textual evidence at all
- may offer a reasonable idea or analysis and may provide textual evidence, but this evidence is only weakly connected to the idea or analysis
- may offer accurate/relevant textual evidence without providing an idea or analysis

In addition, partially sufficient responses may be somewhat unclear or vague.

**Evidence may consist of a direct quotation, a paraphrase, or a specific synopsis.**

RG-5

29 What Brian faces in Brian's return is that he has forgotten the most important thing about living in the wilderness. Like with the storm; hard rain, shot in the leg and hit in the head by the canoe.

**Score Point: 1 – Partially Sufficient**

This student offers a general idea of one of Brian's conflicts (he has forgotten the most important thing about living in the wilderness) and tries to explain this idea with brief references to relevant text. However, these references are not well linked to the conflict presented.

RG-6

29 One conflict that Brian faces is that the morning after the storm he cannot find any fire wood. Brian searches around his campsite for dry wood to start a fire.

**Score Point: 1 – Partially Sufficient**

In this response the student offers a reasonable conflict that Brian faces in the story (the morning after the storm he cannot find firewood). The second sentence of the response is simply a statement of fact and does not provide relevant textual support for this conflict.

RG-7

29 Brian endures a very prominent man vs. nature conflict. A vicious storm hits which destroyed all the preparation Brian had made in a matter of minutes. The natural carnage leaves him with physical infirmities, but mental awareness.

**Score Point: 1 – Partially Sufficient**

This student presents a clear and definitive conflict that Brian faces (Man vs. Nature). However, the summary of the story's events as they relate to this conflict are too general to be considered a specific synopsis.

RG-8

29 A conflict that Brian faces is when the weather gets really bad. In the story it said how his tent with him in it fell off the embankment 5 feet. Now he has to fix his tent plus he got hurt.

**Score Point: 1 – Partially Sufficient**

In this response the student presents a reasonable idea about one conflict Brian faced (the weather gets really bad). The student attempts to support this idea with a paraphrase of relevant text (his tent...fell off the embankment) but does not link this incident to the conflict.

**READING RUBRIC—LITERARY SELECTION**  
**OBJECTIVE 2**

**SCORE POINT 2 — SUFFICIENT**

In **sufficient** responses, the student

- ❑ must offer a reasonable theme, character trait, conflict, or change and support it with accurate/relevant textual evidence
  
- ❑ must offer a reasonable analysis of a literary technique or figurative expression and support it with accurate/relevant textual evidence

In addition, sufficient responses must be clear and specific.

**Evidence may consist of a direct quotation, a paraphrase, or a specific synopsis.**

RG-9

29 One conflict Brian faces in "Brian's Return" is searching for dry wood after a stormy night. It would be almost impossible to find wood that can start a fire with as much rain as he got. Thankfully, he knew that Birch Bark was nearly waterproof. So he was able to make a fire after all.

**Score Point: 2 – Sufficient**

In this response the student is very specific about one conflict Brian faces (searching for dry wood after a stormy night). The student goes on to illustrate both the seriousness of the situation (almost impossible...) and Brian's solution (knew that birch bark was nearly waterproof), using a synthesis of text analysis, paraphrase, and synopsis.

RG-10

29 Brian faces the conflict of man vs. nature because the storm is too powerful so therefore there is no way he can overpower it because the wind and the rain is so strong it moved the canoe ten feet away from its original location and hit him in the head causing him to pass out.

**Score Point: 2 – Sufficient**

In this response the student specifies the type of conflict Brian faces (Man vs. Nature) and links it to the story (the storm is too powerful for him). The student then provides a specific synopsis of relevant text (it moved the canoe...pass out) to prove the validity of this conflict.

RG-11

29 One conflict Brian faces is surviving the storm. In the story It says, "He had forgotten the most important thing, expect the un-expected." Brian had not planned for the storm, he forgot to gather dry firewood, stake down the tent, or dig a drain for water around the tent. In effect, the tent roled down the hill, Brian was stabbed in the leg, and he had to use the next day for gathering firewood + cleaning<sup>up</sup>

Score Point: 2 – Sufficient

This student offers a clear understanding of a conflict that Brian faces (surviving the storm). The student then uses various pieces of relevant text (had forgotten the most important thing, had not planned for the storm, forgot to gather dry wood, the tent rolled down the hill, had to use the next day...cleaning up) to provide the reader with a specific overview of Brian before, during, and after the storm. Although this response nicely details the reasons it was so difficult for Brian to survive the storm, it does not contain the particularly insightful idea(s) needed to be considered exemplary.

RG-12

29 A major conflict that Brian had was with himself. He continuously criticizes himself, asking, "Had he forgot everything?" He continuously felt stupid or as if he were wasting supplies, like matches. With his eyes focused on his flaws he couldn't appreciate his survival or the wilderness

Score Point: 2 - Sufficient

This student clearly identifies one conflict that Brian faces (himself). The student expands upon this idea (he continually criticizes himself) and supports it with a direct quote from the story. The student continues to expand upon this idea with more analysis (felt stupid) and paraphrase of relevant text (wasting supplies, like matches).

**READING RUBRIC—LITERARY SELECTION**  
**OBJECTIVE 2**

**SCORE POINT 3 — EXEMPLARY**

In **exemplary** responses, the student

- ☐ must offer a particularly thoughtful or insightful theme, character trait, conflict, or change and strongly support it with accurate/relevant textual evidence
  
- ☐ must offer a particularly thoughtful or insightful analysis of a literary technique or figurative expression and strongly support it with accurate/relevant textual evidence

In addition, exemplary responses must demonstrate the student's depth of understanding and ability to effectively connect textual evidence to the idea or analysis.

**Evidence may consist of a direct quotation, a paraphrase, or a specific synopsis.**

RG-13

29 A major difficulty that Brian experiences is his own nature, which has not completely adapted to the unpredictable environs of the wild. As he chastizes himself, he explains that, "He had forgotten the most important thing about living in the wilderness... expect the unexpected." This forgetfulness and unadapted nature, caused Brian to fall victim to shortsightedness by failing to properly prepare for the storm. He "hadn't made a secure camp... hadn't brought in wood..." and is injured as a result, "...reached down to feel an arrow shaft protruding from his leg."

**Score Point: 3 – Exemplary**

In this response the student presents a particularly thoughtful analysis of Brian's conflict (his own nature, which has not completely adapted to the unpredictable environs of the wild). The student's effective use of quotations from the story provides strong support for this analysis and enhances the overall quality of the response.

RG-14

29 As Brian once again returns to the wilderness, he is, from the very beginning, faced with a violent storm that causes major problems. "It was a long night. The next day was a repair day..." As Brian awakes to a wrecked tent, no firewood, and a wound in his leg, he is filled with old memories over the fact that in nature you must "expect the unexpected." He had forgotten after returning to civilized cities that nature is man's major conflict.

**Score Point: 3 – Exemplary**

The student effectively combines specific synopsis (faced with a violent storm... awakes to a wrecked tent, no firewood...) and relevant direct quotes ("It was a long night. The next day was repair day..." "expect the unexpected") to demonstrate an in-depth understanding of Brian's conflict (nature is man's major conflict).

RG-15

29 One conflict Brian faces from "Brian's Return" is to understand the ways of nature. To do that Brian has to overcome the fact that nature can't be controlled (the sudden storm) and/or tamed (the hungry bear). Nature is about accepting and expecting the unexpected, which means Brian has to become a part of nature that he separated from it and accept what nature is really like. That is a major struggle for Brian b/c he had forgotten this "law of the wild" and has to deal with the "guilt, anger, and pressure Brian displays towards himself.

**Score Point: 3 – Exemplary**

This student presents a clear idea of one of Brian's conflicts (to understand the ways of nature). The student proceeds to thoroughly explore this idea by incorporating thoughtful analysis (nature can't be controlled and/or tamed) with relevant examples from the text (the sudden storm, the hungry bear). The synthesis of analysis and paraphrase ("Nature is about accepting and expecting the unexpected...; Brian has to become a part of nature and not be separated from it...") allows the student to present an insightful response.

RG-16

Brian's most tangible conflict in the story is the unforeseen storm and  
29 its aftermath. It was not a violent storm. "It never did thunder or lightening" and therefore Brian underestimated its destructive power ("He was in good shelter, waterproof - let it rain.") and reacted too slowly. Before he really grasped what was going on, his tent had collapsed (trapping him inside), he had rolled off the embankment into the water, jabbed himself with an arrow, and had been knocked out by his own canoe.

**Score Point: 3 – Exemplary**

In this response the student presents a thorough understanding of one conflict that Brian faced (the unforeseen storm and its aftermath). The student fully expands upon this idea with a solid combination of analysis (It was not a violent storm...; reacted too slowly; Before he really grasped what was going on...), relevant quotes ("It never did thunder or lightening," "He was in good shelter..."), and synopsis (his tent collapsed...). The result is a particularly thoughtful, well-crafted response.

## **Objective 3 – Expository Selection**

- 30 Why are the memories of Willow Creek important to Rick Bass? Support your answer with evidence from the selection.

**READING RUBRIC—EXPOSITORY SELECTION**  
**OBJECTIVE 3**

**SCORE POINT 0 — INSUFFICIENT**

In **insufficient** responses, the student

- may draw a conclusion, offer an interpretation, or make a prediction that is not based on the text
- may draw a conclusion, offer an interpretation, or make a prediction that does not address the question
- may draw a conclusion, offer an interpretation, or make a prediction that is not reasonable
- may draw a conclusion, offer an interpretation, or make a prediction that is too general or vague to determine whether it is reasonable
- may incorrectly analyze or evaluate a characteristic of the text
- may not address the question in any way or may answer a different question than the one asked
- may offer only incomplete or irrelevant textual evidence

In addition, insufficient responses may lack clarity.

**Evidence may consist of a direct quotation, a paraphrase, or a specific synopsis.**

RG-17

30 I guess because now as an adult he is telling us a story from when he was nine years old and there are so many memories to the story. Talking about he used to go down with a flashlight to get a bucket of water when he was little

**Score Point: 0 – Insufficient**

In this response the student presents an idea (because now as an adult...nine years old) in an attempt to address the question, but the idea is so vague and inconclusive that it is unclear whether the student is answering the question asked. Furthermore, the text reference the student provides does not support why Bass's memories are important to him.

RG-18

30 It reminds him of when he was younger. It says in paragraph 6 "I remember one winter night, camped down at the deer pasture, when a rimy ice fog had moved in, blanketing the hill country. I was just a teenager

**Score Point: 0 – Insufficient**

In this response the student presents a vague idea (reminds him of when he was younger) and irrelevant text ("I remember one winter night . . ."). Neither the idea nor the text explains why the memories of Willow Creek are important to Rick Bass.

RG-19

30 Memories are important to Rick Bass because he remembers happenings that were set when he was in Willow Creek. For example, the geese and how they were trying to land in the foggy weather. This brings great memories that will last a life time when he was in nature.

**Score Point: 0 – Insufficient**

In this response the student simply presents a rephrasing of the question (remembers happenings . . .) and offers a text reference (the geese . . .). However, it is unclear from the response why this event represents an important memory.

RG-20

30 He believes that he has become too tamed and must just let himself go for a while and what better place than the wilderness.

**Score Point: 0 – Insufficient**

The student attempts to answer the question, but the ideas presented (He believes he has become too tamed . . . let himself go for a while . . .) do not address the question asked.

## **READING RUBRIC—EXPOSITORY SELECTION**

### **OBJECTIVE 3**

#### **SCORE POINT 1 — PARTIALLY SUFFICIENT**

In **partially sufficient** responses, the student

- may draw a reasonable conclusion, offer a reasonable interpretation, or make a reasonable prediction that is supported only by general, incomplete, or partially accurate/relevant textual evidence or provide no textual evidence at all
- may offer a reasonable analysis or evaluation of a characteristic of the text that is supported only by general, incomplete, or partially accurate/relevant textual evidence or provide no textual evidence at all
- may offer a reasonable idea, analysis, or evaluation and may provide textual evidence, but this evidence is only weakly connected to the idea, analysis, or evaluation
- may offer accurate/relevant textual evidence without drawing a conclusion, offering an interpretation, making a prediction, or providing an analysis or evaluation

In addition, partially sufficient responses may be somewhat unclear or vague.

**Evidence may consist of a direct quotation, a paraphrase, or a specific synopsis.**

RG-21

30 The memories from Willow Creek are so important because it is at Willow Creek where he realizes the impact nature has on his life.

**Score Point: 1 – Partially Sufficient**

In this response the student draws a reasonable conclusion about why Rick Bass's memories of Willow Creek are important (Willow Creek is where he realizes the impact nature has on his life). However, the student does not support this conclusion with textual evidence.

RG-22

30 That night the geese were trying to land, but it became so foggy. The next morning the geese flew away with the last of his civility. It seemed that a part of himself were gone with the geese and fog.

**Score Point: 1 – Partially Sufficient**

In this response the student provides accurate/relevant textual evidence (the geese flew away with the last of his civility . . .) but does not offer a reasonable conclusion.

RG-23

30 The experiences of Rick's childhood have greatly affected the man he is today. Every incident from seeing the fish under the ice to the geese flying over his head has touched his life in some special way. These memories help him to remember who he is and where he came from.

**Score Point: 1 – Partially Sufficient**

This student presents some general ideas of why the memories of Willow Creek are important to Rick Bass (greatly affected the man he is today, touched his life in a special way) and offers general references to relevant text (the fish, the geese). The response would need to be clearer and more specific overall to be considered sufficient.

RG-24

30 The memories of Willow Creek are important to Rick Bass because they are the experiences which have made him feel close with nature. In the experience with the geese, once they leave, he feels as if a part of himself has left.

**Score Point: 1 – Partially Sufficient**

The student draws a reasonable conclusion of why the memories of Willow Creek are important to Rick Bass (they are experiences which have made him feel close with nature). However, the paraphrase of text provided (he feels a part of himself has left) supports his loss of civility, not his close ties to the wild. The student does not link the correct text to the idea offered.

**READING RUBRIC—EXPOSITORY SELECTION**  
**OBJECTIVE 3**

**SCORE POINT 2 — SUFFICIENT**

In **sufficient** responses, the student

- must draw a reasonable conclusion, offer a reasonable interpretation, or make a reasonable prediction and must support it with accurate/relevant textual evidence
  
- must offer a reasonable analysis or evaluation of a characteristic of the selection and must support it with accurate/relevant textual evidence

In addition, sufficient responses must be clear and specific.

**Evidence may consist of a direct quotation, a paraphrase, or a specific synopsis.**

RG-25

30 The memories of "Willow Creek" are important to Rick Bass because he feels as if he is a part of nature, a part of the wilderness. When Rick finds the geese gone, he feels as if part of his civility went with them. Rick belongs in the wilderness and the memories put him there.

**Score Point: 2 – Sufficient**

This student draws a reasonable conclusion about the importance of Rick Bass's memories of Willow Creek (he feels as if he is a part of the wilderness, the memories put him there). The student supports this conclusion with an accurate paraphrase of relevant text (When Rick finds...his civility went with them.).

RG-26

30 The memories of Willow Creek are important to Rick Bass because they taught him the importance of nature, never giving up, and not taking life for granted. He saw the fog kept the geese from flying onward or landing, but they never gave up on flying over the cabin until the fog died down, and they could continue their journey. He also noticed the true beauty of ice on the creek and its importance affected the fish and himself.

**Score Point: 2 – Sufficient**

This student presents a number of life's lessons (importance of nature, never giving up, and not taking life for granted) and links them to the main two incidents that Rick Bass recalls from Willow Creek (the geese in the fog, the fish under the ice) to clearly show why these memories are important.

RG-27

30 Memories of Willow Creek are important to Rick Bass, because they helped shape who he is today. Bass writes, "both the fog and the geese were gone...and they had left behind a boy, a young man, who was now thoroughly wild." If Bass had not lived in Willow Creek he may not have developed the fondness for nature that defines who he is as an adult.

**Score Point: 2 – Sufficient**

In this response the student presents a reasonable conclusion about why the memories of Willow Creek are important to Rick Bass (developed a fondness for nature that defines who he is as an adult). The student supports this conclusion with a direct quotation of accurate, relevant text.

RG-28

30 The memories of Willow Creek are important to Rick Bass because it helped him to appreciate nature and his own worth. This is emphasized in paragraph 1 when Rick states that "It's hard in this day and age to convince people of just how short lived we are, and how that makes it all more not less important."

**Score Point: 2 – Sufficient**

In this response the student states that Rick Bass's memories helped him to appreciate nature and his own worth. This idea is reasonable and is well supported by a direct quotation from the beginning of the selection. Overall the response is clear and specific.

## READING RUBRIC—EXPOSITORY SELECTION

### OBJECTIVE 3

#### SCORE POINT 3 — EXEMPLARY

In **exemplary** responses, the student

- must offer a particularly thoughtful or insightful conclusion, interpretation, or prediction and strongly support it with accurate/relevant textual evidence
  
- must offer a particularly thoughtful or insightful analysis or evaluation of a characteristic of the text and strongly support it with accurate/relevant textual evidence

In addition, exemplary responses show strong evidence of the student's depth of understanding and ability to effectively connect textual evidence to the idea, analysis, or evaluation.

**Evidence may consist of a direct quotation, a paraphrase, or a specific synopsis.**

RG-29

30 Rick Bass' memories of Willow Creek demonstrate his affinity for and reliance upon nature, and the wild. They have molded him into a wilder human being. "Some part of me had gone with [the geese], some tame or civilized part..." Because of this, he is a man that is qualified to remark upon the importance of nature, and his own insignificance in comparison. "It's hard in this day and age to convince people of just how tiny and short lived we are, and how that makes the wild more, not less, important."

**Score Point: 3 – Exemplary**

This student presents a particularly thoughtful response by analyzing Bass's relationship with nature (his affinity for and reliance upon nature, his own insignificance in comparison). The student strongly supports these ideas with relevant direct quotes of accurate text.

RG-30

30 The memories of Willow Creek are important to Rick Bass because his experiences there took away his tameness and civility. As he watched the fish swimming under the ice in the creek, he feels "as fresh and alive as we can ever hope to be." When he woke up after the geese were gone he realizes they "flew away with the last of my civility." These memories lead him to the conviction that wilderness "is a salve, a twentieth-century politics to take away the crippling fever of too-much civility, too-much numbness."

**Score Point: 3 – Exemplary**

In this response the student shows a thorough understanding of how the memories of Willow Creek are important to Rick Bass (his experiences there took away his tameness and civility), then proceeds to support this idea by combining specific synopsis (As he watched the fish..., When he woke up...) with relevant direct quotations ("as fresh and alive...", "flew away..."). The student's last sentence sums up the result of Bass's experience (lead him to the conviction...), giving the response a strong sense of completeness.

RG-31

30 *These memories are important to Bass because they are the moments in his childhood that molded his belief-system. "It's hard...to convince people of just how...short lived we are and how that makes the wild more, not less, important." Each encounter he had at Willow Creek helped Bass realize his passion for wild things. "I could feel my heart beating, and it seemed those geese were coming straight for me, as if they too could feel that barely controlled wildness."*

**Score Point: 3 – Exemplary**

This student's response reveals an in-depth understanding of why the memories are important to Rick Bass (molded his belief system, helped Bass realize his passion for wild things). These insights are strongly supported with direct quotes of relevant text ("It's hard...to convince people of just how...short lived we are..." "I could feel my heart beating...").

RG-32

30 *At Willow Creek Bass learned that there is a life force greater than man, one that he cannot control. He was "graced with the sight and idea of something new, something wild, something just beyond [his] reach." His memories of the creek shaped him into a man "who thoroughly loved wild things."*

**Score Point: 3 – Exemplary**

The student presents a particularly thoughtful response by providing keen insight (Bass learned that there is a life force greater than man...) that is strongly linked to relevant text ("graced with the sight..."). The student adds even more depth to this idea by combining further analysis (His memories...shaped him into a man) with another relevant quote ("who thoroughly loved wild things").

## **Objective 3 – Literary/Expository Selection**

- 31 How is the power of nature an important theme in both “Brian’s Return” and “On Willow Creek”? Support your answer with evidence from both selections.

**READING RUBRIC  
LITERARY/EXPOSITORY CROSSOVER  
OBJECTIVE 3**

**SCORE POINT 0 — INSUFFICIENT**

In **insufficient** responses, the student

- may draw a conclusion, offer an interpretation, or make a prediction that is not based on the selections
- may draw a conclusion, offer an interpretation, or make a prediction that does not address the question
- may draw a conclusion, offer an interpretation, or make a prediction that is not reasonable
- may draw a conclusion, offer an interpretation, or make a prediction that is too general or vague to determine whether it is reasonable
- may incorrectly analyze or evaluate a characteristic of text based on both selections
- may not address the question in any way or may answer a different question than the one asked
- may offer only incomplete or irrelevant textual evidence from one or both selections

In addition, insufficient responses may lack clarity.

**Evidence may consist of a direct quotation, a paraphrase, or a specific synopsis.**

RG-33

31 In "Brain's Return" and "On Willow Creek" nature plays a powerful role. Brain used nature for the survival of a human and Rick used nature for survival of some geese that need help getting to land.

**Score Point: 0 – Insufficient**

The student attempts to answer the question, but the first part of the response lacks clarity (use of nature for survival) and the second part is inaccurate (...some geese that need help getting to land).

31 The power of nature is an important factor in these two short stories. Because due to their setting and the weather they were affected greatly. For Brian it was made a lot harder because of the rain and as for Rick the coldness of the area made it difficult to fish.

**Score Point: 0 – Insufficient**

In this response the student presents a conclusion that is too vague (their setting and the weather) for the reader to be able to conclude that it is reasonable. The student offers text references for both selections; however, the first one lacks clarity (it was made a lot harder because of the rain), and the second one is inaccurate (the coldness of the area made it difficult to fish).

31 Nature is a part of everyone. It controls everything. In nature, we can't stop a rainstorm from hitting, but we can learn from it and grow as people. You have to take whatever life throws at you. The way you handle it defines your character. Going on instinct and depending on nature will help you survive. Nature is everywhere.

**Score Point: 0 – Insufficient**

This student presents a lengthy response listing the various aspects and possible benefits of nature (part of everyone, controls everything, we can learn from it and grow) but does not link any of these ideas to either selection.

31 The power of nature helped Brian's and Rick's life somehow. For example Brian would have trouble if it wasn't for the supply he used like the wood for fire and the fish to eat. Rick's life was helped by the power of nature to show him how great it is. Also Rick has memories from nature which he's using to demonstrate to others so they can notice it also.

**Score Point: 0 – Insufficient**

The student attempts to respond to the question of how the power of nature is an important theme in the two selections (Brian would have trouble...; show him [Bass] how great it is). However, the analysis is vague, and there is no text support.

**READING RUBRIC**  
**LITERARY/EXPOSITORY CROSSOVER**  
**OBJECTIVE 3**

**SCORE POINT 1 — PARTIALLY SUFFICIENT**

In **partially sufficient** responses, the student

- may draw a reasonable conclusion, offer a reasonable interpretation, or make a reasonable prediction based on both selections but supported only by general, incomplete, or partially accurate/relevant textual evidence from one or both selections
- may draw a reasonable conclusion, offer a reasonable interpretation, or make a reasonable prediction based on both selections but may offer textual support from only one selection or may offer no textual support at all
- may offer a reasonable analysis or evaluation of a characteristic of text based on both selections that is supported only by general, incomplete, or partially accurate/relevant textual evidence from one or both selections
- may offer a reasonable analysis or evaluation of a characteristic of text based on both selections but may offer textual support from only one selection or may offer no textual support at all
- may offer a reasonable idea, analysis, or evaluation based on both selections and may provide textual evidence from both selections, but this evidence is only weakly connected to the idea, analysis, or evaluation
- may offer accurate/relevant textual evidence from both selections but may draw a conclusion, offer an interpretation, make a prediction, or provide an analysis or evaluation based on only one selection
- may offer accurate/relevant textual evidence from both selections without drawing a conclusion, offering an interpretation, making a prediction, or providing an analysis or evaluation

In addition, partially sufficient responses may be somewhat unclear or vague or may indicate that the student has difficulty making connections across selections.

**Evidence may consist of a direct quotation, a paraphrase, or a specific synopsis.**

RG-37

- 31 The power of nature is an important theme in both "Brian's Return" and "Willow Creek" because nature shows them how powerful it is.  
"no matter what he thought would happen, nature would do what it wanted." "All of the hill country's creatures had helped me."

**Score Point: 1 – Partially Sufficient**

In this response the student presents a conclusion that is simply a restatement of the question (nature shows them how powerful it is). However, the student does offer quotations of relevant text.

31 The power of nature is an important theme in both excerpts because it affects the people in the story. In "Brian's Return", Brian is tossed around because he is unprepared for the storm that happened so quickly. In "On the Willow Creek" the fog didn't allow the geese to land, but in turn, Bass listened to their "sweet" music and it made a lasting impression on him.

**Score Point: 1 – Partially Sufficient**

In this response the student states that the power of nature is an important theme because it affects the people in the story. This idea is weak because it is general. Moreover, while the textual evidence for "On Willow Creek" (Bass listened to their "sweet" music, made a lasting impression on him) can be considered adequate support for this idea, the textual evidence for "Brian's Return" (Brian is tossed around...is unprepared for the storm) is too general.

31 The power of nature is an important theme in both selections because of the affect nature has on the story. In "Brian's Return" a storm causes Brian's night to be interrupted and causes some conflicts with shelter being dry, and his fire. In "On Willow's Creek" nature's role with fog, causes sleep problems, and the inability for the geese to land during the night. Nature also helped both of these young men and their selves while growing up.

**Score Point: 1 – Partially Sufficient**

In this response the student presents a synopsis of key events to show how the power of nature is an important theme in both selections. However, the synopsis for "Brian's Return" is not specific enough (a storm causes Brian's night to be interrupted...). The synopsis for "On Willow Creek" is also too general and somewhat irrelevant (nature's role with fog causes sleep problems...).

31 It makes them realize that nature is beautiful and important, anything can happen at any time. "On: the willow Creek" page 10 paragraph 13 Rick Bass said, "That's one of the greatest blessings of the hill country." "Brian's Return" page 8 Paragraph 49 Brian says "Never assume anything, expect the unexpected."

**Score Point: 1 – Partially Sufficient**

This student draws reasonable conclusions about the power of nature as an important theme in the two selections (nature is beautiful and important, anything can happen). However, the text the student offers for support ("That's one of the greatest blessings of the hill country...", "Never assume anything, expect the unexpected"), though relevant, is not well linked to these conclusions. The student's response would have to be clearer and more specific to be considered sufficient.

**READING RUBRIC  
LITERARY/EXPOSITORY CROSSOVER  
OBJECTIVE 3**

**SCORE POINT 2 — SUFFICIENT**

In **sufficient** responses, the student

- must draw a reasonable conclusion, offer a reasonable interpretation, or make a reasonable prediction based on both selections and must support it with accurate/relevant textual evidence from both selections
  
- must offer a reasonable analysis or evaluation of a characteristic of text based on both selections and must support it with accurate/relevant textual evidence from both selections

In addition, sufficient responses indicate that the student is able to make clear and specific connections across selections.

**Evidence may consist of a direct quotation, a paraphrase, or a specific synopsis.**

RG-41

31 They both found out that nature is a wonderful and mysterious place. In "On Willow Creek" Rick Bass was amazed that the fish could live under the ice. "I ran... having been graced with the sight... something just beyond my reach." In "Brian's Return" the storm showed him that nature is an unpredictable force in the world. "And finally no matter what he thought would happen, nature would do what it wanted to do."

**Score Point: 2 – Sufficient**

The student draws a conclusion that is reasonable for both selections (nature is wonderful and mysterious) and clarifies this idea for each selection (Bass was amazed by the fish. Brian discovered that nature is an unpredictable force). These conclusions are well supported by relevant direct quotations from both selections.

- 31 The power of nature engulfs the messages of "Brian's Return" and "On Willow Creek." "Brian's Return" focuses on the physical strength of nature and how "nature would do what it wanted to do" without any qualms. "On Willow Creek" centers on the emotional attachment one acquires when surrounded by the power of nature. Nature is "something new, something wild, something just beyond [one's] reach" whose power has an incredible effect on the minds of people all across the world.

**Score Point: 2 – Sufficient**

The student presents one theme for "Brian's Return" (the physical strength of nature) and a different theme (the emotional attachment one acquires...) for "On Willow Creek." The student supports each of these ideas with a relevant quotation, clearly showing how the power of nature is an important theme in both selections.

31. The power of nature is an important theme because in both selections it shows how although humans are considered to be powerful creatures, we have no control over nature. In "Brian's Return" Brian did not expect it to rain during his trip, so he wasn't prepared, at all, for the storm that occurred during his trip. The story states "...nature would do what it wanted to do, he had to be part of it, part of what it was really like." And "On Willow Creek" Rick Bass as a child is astonished during the foggy night waiting for the geese to land. Although Bass wants them to land, "they did not come." He had to accept the fact that he had no control over the wild.

**Score Point: 2 – Sufficient**

In this response the student presents a reasonable conclusion for both selections (humans have no control over nature). In "Brian's Return" the student provides some relevant specifics about Brian (did not expect it to rain... he wasn't prepared at all for the storm...) to clarify this idea, then supports it with a relevant quotation ("...nature would do what it wanted to do..."). The student duplicates this for "On Willow Creek," offering a specific synopsis (Rick Bass waited for the geese to land but they did not) to support the conclusion that man has no control over the wild.

31 The power of nature is an important theme in both "Brian's Return" and "On Willow Creek" because both stories show how nature is a relief from the "real" or civilized world because the "On Willow Creek" it says, "That's one of the great blessings of the hill country, and all wildness: it is a salve, a twentieth-century poultice to take away the crippling fever of too-much civility, too-much numbness." and in "Brian's Return" Brian described nature and wilderness as being "... a painting a beautiful private diorama."

**Score Point: 2 – Sufficient**

The student offers a reasonable conclusion of how the power of nature is an important theme in both selections (nature is a relief from the "real" or civilized world). The student provides relevant direct quotations from both selections to support this idea.

**READING RUBRIC  
LITERARY/EXPOSITORY CROSSOVER  
OBJECTIVE 3**

**SCORE POINT 3 — EXEMPLARY**

In **exemplary** responses, the student

- must offer a particularly thoughtful or insightful conclusion, interpretation, or prediction based on both selections and strongly support it with accurate/relevant textual evidence from both selections
  
- must offer a particularly thoughtful or insightful analysis or evaluation of a characteristic of text based on both selections and strongly support it with accurate/relevant textual evidence from both selections

In addition, exemplary responses indicate that the student is able to make meaningful connections across selections. These responses show strong evidence of the student's depth of understanding and ability to effectively connect textual evidence to the idea, analysis, or evaluation.

**Evidence may consist of a direct quotation, a paraphrase, or a specific synopsis.**

RG-45

31 Both "On Willow Creek" and "Brian's Return" emphasize the bigness and significance of nature. Bass opens his essay "On Willow Creek" by stating that human life is "tiny and short lived," which inversely causes nature to be "more, not less, important." Bass states, "I could barely stand the hugeness, the unlimited future of life." In "Brian's Return," the author's closing statement observes that, "no matter what [Brian] thought would happen, nature would do what it wanted to." This points out the power of nature and man's relative insignificance in comparison.

**Score Point: 3 – Exemplary**

The student combines a number of relevant direct quotes ("tiny and short lived," "more not less important," "no matter what [Brian] thought...") with particularly thoughtful analysis—the bigness and significance of nature and man's relative insignificance in comparison—to present a strong and effective response.

31 In both "Brian's Return" and "Willow Creek," nature is valuable because it teaches the characters a lesson. In "Brian's return," nature teaches Brian that "He had to be a part of it [nature]." Through his experiences surviving the storm he learns that he has to accept nature as it is, not as he wishes it would be. In "Willow Creek" Rick Bass learns a similar lesson, that nature has a life and will of its own. It counterbalances the tameness of society by being "a twentieth-century poltice to take away the crippling fever of too much civility." Both Brian and Rick Bass are enriched by their evolving relationship with nature.

**Score Point: 3 – Exemplary**

This student concludes that the power of nature is an important theme in both selections because it teaches the characters a lesson. The student clearly explains how this applies to Brian with a combination of a direct quotation and paraphrase (he has to accept nature as it is, not as he wishes it would be). The student's insightful analysis of "Willow Creek" (nature has a life and will of its own, counterbalances the tameness of society) is also well supported by a direct quotation. The last sentence of the response creates another interesting connection between the two characters and their relationship to nature.

31 Nature is the key element in both stories, and both characters have experience with nature that lead them to marvel at and respect the ways of nature. In "Brian's Return" it is a negative experience with the forces of nature (being injured in a storm) that led to his understanding that "no matter what he thought would happen, nature would do what it wanted to do." In "On Willow Creek", it was positive interactions with nature, such as witnessing fish swimming under ice and of geese honking in fog that led to the author's belief that nature is a "salve, a twentieth-century poultice to take away the crippling fever of too much civility, too-much numbness." These experiences made Brian and Bass fully aware of how nature can affect our lives forever.

**Score Point: 3 – Exemplary**

The student thoughtfully concludes that the power of nature is an important theme in both selections because both characters have experiences with nature that lead them to marvel at and respect the ways of nature, although these experiences are very different. The student proceeds to thoroughly explore this idea by illustrating the negative confrontation Brian had with the storm (being injured) and the positive interaction Bass had with the wild (fish swimming under ice, geese honking in fog).

31 BOTH BRIAN AND BASS COME TO REALIZE THAT THEY MUST ACCEPT THEIR WILD NATURE IN ORDER TO SURVIVE ALTHOUGH THEY ARE IN DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES. BRIAN LEARNS THAT "...NATURE WOULD DO WHAT IT WANTED TO DO. HE HAD TO BE A PART OF IT, PART OF WHAT IT REALLY WAS LIKE..." TO SURVIVE. BASS, ON THE OTHER HAND, THINKS THAT HIS LOSS OF CIVILITY IS A WAY TO SURVIVE IN THE MANMADE WORLD SINCE HE BELIEVES THAT THE WILD/NATURE "IS A TWENTIETH-CENTURY POULTICE TO TAKE AWAY THE CRIPPLING FEVER OF TOO MUCH CIVILITY..."

**Score Point: 3 – Exemplary**

In this response the student draws a conclusion that makes a particularly insightful connection between the two selections, stating that the power of nature is an important theme because Brian and Bass come to realize that they must accept their wild nature in order to survive. The student strongly links this idea to a relevant quotation from "Brian's Return" and a combination of insightful analysis and quotation from "On Willow Creek" to present an in-depth response.

# WRITTEN COMPOSITION

## Rubrics and Sample Responses

Write an essay explaining how your surroundings can affect your life.

The information in the box below will help you remember what you should think about when you write your composition.

**REMEMBER—YOU SHOULD**

- write about the assigned topic
- make your writing thoughtful and interesting
- make sure that each sentence you write contributes to your composition as a whole
- make sure that your ideas are clear and easy for the reader to follow
- write about your ideas in depth so that the reader is able to develop a good understanding of what you are saying
- proofread your writing to correct errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure

**The names of individuals mentioned in the compositions have been changed to protect the confidentiality of the students whose responses appear in this guide.**

## SCORE POINT 1

EACH COMPOSITION AT THIS SCORE POINT IS AN INEFFECTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WRITER'S IDEAS.

### *Focus and Coherence*

- Individual paragraphs and/or the composition as a whole are not focused. The writer may shift abruptly from idea to idea, making it difficult for the reader to understand how the ideas included in the composition are related.
- The composition as a whole has little, or no, sense of completeness. The introduction and conclusion, if present, may be perfunctory.
- A substantial amount of writing may be extraneous because it does not contribute to the development or quality of the composition. In some cases, the composition overall may be only weakly connected to the prompt.

### *Organization*

- The writer's progression of thought from sentence to sentence and/or paragraph to paragraph is not logical. Sometimes weak progression results from an absence of transitions or from the use of transitions that do not make sense. At other times, the progression of thought is simply not evident, even if appropriate transitions are included.
- An organizational strategy is not evident. The writer may present ideas in a random or haphazard way, making the composition difficult to follow.
- Wordiness and/or repetition may stall the progression of ideas.

### *Development of Ideas*

- The writer presents one or more ideas but provides little or no development of those ideas.
- The writer presents one or more ideas and attempts to develop them. However, this development is so general or vague that it prevents the reader from understanding the writer's ideas.
- The writer presents only a plot summary of a published piece of writing, a movie, or a television show.
- The writer omits information, which creates significant gaps between ideas. These gaps prevent the reader from clearly understanding those ideas.

### *Voice*

- The writer does not engage the reader, therefore failing to establish a connection.
- There may be little or no sense of the writer's individual voice. The composition does not sound authentic or original. The writer is unable to express his/her individuality or unique perspective.

### *Conventions*

- There is little or no evidence in the composition that the writer can correctly apply the conventions of the English language. Severe and/or frequent errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure may cause the writing to be unclear or difficult to read. These errors weaken the composition by causing an overall lack of fluency.
- The writer may misuse or omit words and phrases and may frequently write awkward sentences. These weaknesses interfere with the effective communication of ideas.

DO YOU THINK THAT YOUR SURROUNDINGS CAN AFFECT YOUR LIFE? IN MY OPINION, I THINK THAT YOUR SURROUNDINGS CAN AFFECT YOUR LIFE BOTH POSITIVELY AND NEGATIVELY.

TO BEGIN WITH, I BELIEVE THAT YOUR SURROUNDINGS CAN AFFECT YOUR LIFE POSITIVELY. FIRST OF ALL, A CHURCH SURROUNDING IS POSITIVE. GOING TO CHURCH WILL MAKE YOUR LIFE BETTER. IF YOU GO TO CHURCH YOUR LIFE WILL HAVE A MORE POSITIVE OUTLOOK. ALSO, SURROUNDING YOURSELF WITH GOOD FRIENDS CAN AFFECT YOUR LIFE POSITIVELY TOO. SURROUNDING YOURSELF WITH GOOD FRIENDS WILL DEFINITELY CHANGE YOUR LIFESTYLE TO A GOOD ONE. HAVING GOOD FRIENDS IS NOT ONLY POSITIVE BUT IMPORTANT.

HOWEVER, I ALSO BELIEVE THAT YOUR SURROUNDINGS CAN HAVE A NEGATIVE AFFECT ON YOUR LIFE AS WELL. FIRST OF ALL, LISTENING TO CERTAIN MUSIC GROUPS CAN HAVE A NEGATIVE AFFECT ON YOUR LIFE. I HAVE PERSONALLY EXPERIENCED THIS. I USED TO LISTEN TO REALLY HEAVY ROCK, LIKE METALLICA, KORN, ETC... I DIDN'T REALIZE BUT THE MORE I LISTENED TO THEM, THE MORE NEGATIVE THINGS I WOULD DO. IN ADDITION, THE T.V. PROGRAMS YOU WATCH CAN HAVE A NEGATIVE ASPECT ON YOUR LIFE ALSO. IF YOU WATCH T.V. PROGRAMS ALL OF THE TIME THAT ARE ABOUT MURDER, LIES, AND BETRAYAL, IT CAN HAVE A NEGATIVE AFFECT ON YOU.

CLEARLY, YOU SHOULD NOW BE ABLE TO SEE WHY I THINK THAT YOUR SURROUNDINGS CAN AFFECT YOUR LIFE BOTH POSITIVELY AND NEGATIVELY.

**Score Point: 1**

The writer tries to focus on the general theme that your surroundings can affect your life in a positive and negative way. However, the writer leaps abruptly from idea to idea (church, friends, music groups, and television programs). The absence of transitions between these ideas interferes with the overall coherence and organization of the composition. The writer's tendency to repeat ideas (Going to church will make your life better. If you go to church your life will have a more positive outlook) rather than develop them prevents the progression of ideas by disrupting the sentence-to-sentence movement.

A person's surroundings can affect him in a lot of ways. What's around you can even change a person's life. A good example of how surroundings can affect a person is in the story, "BRIAN'S RETURN" by Gary Paulsen.

This boy Brian was in the wilderness by himself. He went back there after he survived a plane crash. The author didn't say why he went back. So in the story, Brian has a canoe and he's paddling through a big lake. After doing this all day, he makes a camp, catches some fish, and sets up his camp. Here is where the story gets intense. A storm hits in the middle of the night and it is a really bad storm with a lot of wind. First Brian's tent gets all wet inside, then it collapses and he rolls over the edge of the bank and gets stuck in the leg with his own arrow. On top of that, his canoe hits him really hard on the head and knocks him out.

He ends up being OK but it takes him the whole next day to find wood, clean up his leg, and fix his camp. Everything was a mess. That's when Brian realizes that nature really affected him. That's why surroundings can affect your life.

**Score Point: 1**

This composition is ineffective because it is, for the most part, a plot summary of the literary selection "Brian's Return" with little or no sense of the writer's own ideas or voice. The writer does not provide any analysis of the story or draw any conclusions about how Brian's life was affected by his experiences. The writer's attempted analysis (that's when Brian realizes that nature really affected him) is ineffective because it is simply a restatement of the prompt.

Everybody has different surroundings, and most of the time they affect your life in many ways, good and bad.

People everywhere make choices on the way their surroundings are set up. If people are in a good surrounding area people are more likely to do better things than in a bad surroundings. Some things are made difficult because of what people are surrounded by. Many people can get stereotyped just because of their surroundings.

Not only the surroundings affect people's lives now they will affect them in the future. If a person is in a bad community surrounded by people doing wrong, well if their parents didn't teach them well enough they will most likely start doing wrong also. This is why there are so many addictions that

are addicted to any and everything.

The addicts, when ready will go to a new surrounding. The AA meetings and in this surrounding they will try to get help. The new surrounding will affect their life just like the old one did, but this is a positive surrounding.

If a child don't live with both parents, this surrounding can affect their life, the child might just rebel from the step parent because they are not use to the different surroundings. Once a person is used to something being a certain way, they have a reaction to the change of the surrounding. The reactions affect their lives greatly.

**Score Point: 1**

In a weak introduction, the writer states that surroundings can affect a person's life in both good and bad ways. The writer attempts to develop this theme, but the development is so general or vague (in a good surrounding area people are more likely to do better things than in a bad surrounding, this is why there are so many addicts that are addicted to any and everything) that it interferes with the reader's understanding of the ideas. The writer's progression of thought from sentence to sentence is weak and at times simply not evident, which affects the focus and coherence of the response. In addition, the fundamental and severe conventions errors cause the writing to be difficult to follow.

I have never understood how my surroundings can effect my life. I mean how can that happen. My life has always been filled with me always getting in trouble. I understand that everything I do effects somebody. Some things that surround me effect me more. There are times when I just want to be alone. I dont feel like talking to anyone. What I do effects me, too. Sometimes I know I'm doing something wrong but I wont stop what I'm doing to think of anyone else but myself. At that very moment thats all I think about. After I've done my wrong then I think about how I could have done that. I think about what I've done could effect the people that surround me. I know that it effects them a lot because they love me and they care about me. But there are a lot of things out there that effect and will effect my life. There is no doubt about that. There is always something out there that either messes you up or effects you. I know that some things have effected me but I still cant figure out in what way they have effected me. Sometimes when I hear really loud thunder instead of getting scared I fall asleep easily. For

Some people its hard to sleep with a lot of thunder outside. My little sister cant sleep when she hears rain or thunder. I always try to calm her down but it never seems to work. But like I said things effect me, and I know they have because I can feel it when I have been effected by something or someone. When i've been effected I don't say anything to anybody. I don't want people knowing whats wrong with me.

**Score Point: 1**

The writer tries to focus on the theme that he doesn't understand how his surroundings affect his life, but the progression of ideas is stalled by repetition (there are a lot of things out there that affect and will affect my life, I know that some things have affected me). Because the progression of ideas from sentence to sentence is so weak, the development of ideas remains general and vague.

## SCORE POINT 2

EACH COMPOSITION AT THIS SCORE POINT IS A SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WRITER'S IDEAS.

### *Focus and Coherence*

- Individual paragraphs and/or the composition as a whole are somewhat focused. The writer may shift quickly from idea to idea, but the reader has no difficulty understanding how the ideas included in the composition are related.
- The composition as a whole has some sense of completeness. The writer includes an introduction and conclusion, but they may be superficial.
- Some of the writing may be extraneous because it does not contribute to the development or quality of the composition as a whole.

### *Organization*

- The writer's progression of thought from sentence to sentence and/or paragraph to paragraph may not always be smooth or completely logical. Sometimes the writer needs to strengthen the progression by including more meaningful transitions; at other times the writer simply needs to establish a clearer link between ideas.
- The organizational strategy or strategies the writer chooses do not enable the writer to present ideas effectively.
- Some wordiness and/or repetition may be evident, but these weaknesses do not completely stall the progression of ideas.

### *Development of Ideas*

- The writer attempts to develop the composition by listing ideas or briefly explaining them. In both of these cases, the development remains superficial, limiting the reader's understanding and appreciation of the writer's ideas.
- The writer presents one or more ideas and attempts to develop them. However, there is little evidence of depth of thinking because this development may be somewhat general, inconsistent, or contrived.
- The writer may omit small pieces of information that create minor gaps between ideas. However, these gaps do not prevent the reader from understanding those ideas.

### *Voice*

- There may be moments when the writer engages the reader but fails to sustain the connection.
- Individual paragraphs or sections of the composition may sound authentic or original, but the writer has difficulty expressing his/her individuality or unique perspective.

### *Conventions*

- Errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure throughout the composition may indicate a limited control of conventions. Although these errors do not cause the writing to be unclear, they weaken the overall fluency of the composition.
- The writer may include some simple or inaccurate words and phrases and may write some awkward sentences. These weaknesses limit the overall effectiveness of the communication of ideas.

One of the reasons people are so different is because of the surroundings they live in. People's surroundings have a profound effect on their lives.

The place a person grows up is one of the most important influencing factors of their lives. People are shaped by the events and difficulties that happen in the places they grow up. People who grow up in "poor" neighborhoods are often very different from those who grew up in normal or "rich" neighborhoods. Also, people who grow up in or near cities are different from people who grow up in the country. This is due to their surroundings and their ways of life.

The people who surround you also have a large impact on your life. Those people's opinions & actions influence your opinions and actions. The people who surround you also influence the way you make decisions. If a person is surrounded by their friends they are likely to make different decisions than if they were with their parents. Also, people act differently around older people than they do with their friends. If a person is around their elders, they are likely to show more respect than if they were around their peers.

A person's surroundings greatly influence their lives. If people weren't in different surroundings, we would most likely all act and think in the same way. If people's surroundings didn't vary, people's personalities wouldn't vary.

**Score Point: 2**

The writer provides a philosophical but superficial discussion about how people are shaped and influenced by their surroundings. Although the clear control of conventions helps make it a somewhat effective composition and there is some progression of ideas in the second body paragraph, a sense of the writer's individuality is not present, and there is little evidence of depth of thinking.

The surroundings that we encounter everyday is what makes us who we are. Good or bad they are what stay with us through our journey throughout life. Such as the surroundings Bass & Brian encountered.

When Bass saw the ice on the creek for the first time he was amazed by the fact that he saw perch still swimming underneath. He thought for sure that they would have froze but this made him feel a whole new respect for nature that he had seen something he thought was impossible & would carry with him for the rest of his life.

Brian on the other hand knew the experiences of his surroundings would affect before the story. He knew that he could not control nature & that he should expect the unexpected. For example, when the storm hit, blew his tent down & rolled him down the bank only to be stabbed by an arrow in the leg, hit in the head by his canoe, & trapped in his tent. Using his skills from past experiences he was able to be calm while he checked his surroundings & get things back in order. So for him his surroundings from the past helped him then & probably later on.

The surrounding everyone encounters will help

help them or make them realize the importance of life.

**Score Point: 2**

This composition, which is focused entirely on the expository and literary pieces, is a mixture of plot summary and the student's own general ideas about Bass's amazing discovery (this made him feel a whole new respect for nature that he had seen something he thought was impossible) and Brian's preparation for the extremes of his surroundings (he knew he could not control nature and that he should expect the unexpected). The writer draws a few conclusions but does not add enough overall depth to effectively develop the idea that surroundings will help people realize the importance of life.

People often overlook and don't appreciate the surroundings they encounter. Surroundings can change how a person looks at a subject, and their mood.

People take advantage of the environment in which they live. They feel that in order to be happy they have to build offices, buildings and restaurants. Although, if these certain people would go out to a forest and "just listen to" natural water flow, birds chirp and breathe fresh air then maybe their attitude toward construction would be altered and might possibly feel the need to preserve what nature is left in the technologically advanced world.

In continuation, moods are effected by one's surroundings. For example, a classroom. Teachers should put more color and personality into their rooms. Statistics says that students will learn at a more rapid rate through the use of color in their environment.

Students feel tired, bored and unmotivated in a small room with bland walls. Surroundings can also change moods depending on where they feel most comfortable. Such as the stereotypical outdoor or city person. People may feel at ease, happy and relaxed in an environment they enjoy, however, if you were to move that individual to a place completely different they would feel awkward and alone.

To sum up, surroundings are everywhere a person will ever journey throughout their lifetime. They are unavoidable but essential to a person's feelings, thoughts and motions.

**Score Point: 2**

Although each idea in the composition (surroundings can change your view of the environment, your attitude about your classroom, and your comfort level in unfamiliar places) is somewhat focused, the unifying link is weak, which limits the overall coherence. The development of ideas is superficial and somewhat contrived (statistics show that students will learn at a more rapid rate). Some voice is achieved through effective use of language (students feel tired, bored, and unmotivated in a small room with bland walls) but is not sustained throughout the composition.

The environment that we grow up in is what shapes us into the person we become. When we are born we are nothing more than a small ball of clay that the world will take care in molding. No thoughts or opinions have been put into our head. We have not been truly formed yet. It is not until we meet the people that we will grow up with and know the home in which we will live that we begin to develop our minds.

It all starts off when we first see our parents and memorize their faces. We know that they are trust. They are care. And so we learn what love is. We are loyal to them and want to make them happy.

This is how life begins for those of us who are fortunate enough to be born into a loving family. We have started off life on the right track. We assume that the world is a wonderful place and we are very trusting. We will not have a great deal of difficulty in making our way through life; finding friends and working hard to be successful.

Score Point: 2

In this focused composition, the writer provides a philosophical discussion about how the environment we grow up in is what shapes us into the person we become. The reflective approach is engaging, and the reader is able to get a sense of the writer's unique perspective. The organizational strategy is effective; however, there is not enough depth of development to reach a higher score.

## SCORE POINT 3

EACH COMPOSITION AT THIS SCORE POINT IS A GENERALLY EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WRITER'S IDEAS.

### *Focus and Coherence*

- Individual paragraphs and the composition as a whole are, for the most part, focused. The writer generally shows the clear relationship between ideas, making few sudden shifts from one idea to the next.
- The composition as a whole has a sense of completeness. The introduction and conclusion add some depth to the composition.
- Most of the writing contributes to the development or quality of the composition as a whole.

### *Organization*

- The writer's progression of thought from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph is generally smooth and controlled. For the most part, transitions are meaningful, and the links between ideas are logical.
- The organizational strategy or strategies the writer chooses are generally effective.
- Wordiness and/or repetition, if present, are minor problems that do not stall the progression of ideas.

### *Development of Ideas*

- The writer attempts to develop all the ideas included in the composition. Although some ideas may be developed more thoroughly and specifically than others, the development overall reflects some depth of thought, enabling the reader to generally understand and appreciate the writer's ideas.
- The writer's presentation of some ideas may be thoughtful. There may be little evidence that the writer has been willing to take compositional risks when developing the topic.

### *Voice*

- The writer engages the reader and sustains that connection throughout most of the composition.
- For the most part, the composition sounds authentic and original. The writer is generally able to express his/her individuality or unique perspective.

### *Conventions*

- The writer generally demonstrates a good command of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure. Although the writer may make minor errors, they create few disruptions in the fluency of the composition.
- The words, phrases, and sentence structures the writer uses are generally appropriate and contribute to the overall effectiveness of the communication of ideas.

Our surroundings are what make us act, the way we act, make us determine how we want to live our lives and so on. My life and it's surroundings are a very good example of this. You see I grew up in Saudi Arabia; my father works for an oil company. In Saudi I was constantly around soldiers of the American military. They were always around, & when the weekends came around during the Gulf War, my parents through parties and all sorts of American soldiers would show up for a good time. I loved hearing all about their missions, & combat training stories. I looked up to them as a role model, and now I am trying to get accepted into West Point. I am going to become a soldier. What I was around the most influenced me the most, that's why my dream is to fight in the army, but I am one of the lucky kids of our society today. Some kids grow up in bad neighborhoods, & grow up around drugs & death. Where do you think they will be at the age of 16 or 18 if they grow up around those things? I know, Prison, or even dead in a ditch. Surroundings are what give us our ambitions in life, our dreams and hopes. What we grow up around will affect our lives

much more than what our parents say, or what we see on TV. Because this is real life, there's no script, there's no undo button! There is only you, and the people you hang out with.

**Score Point: 3**

In this composition, the writer combines narrative and philosophical approaches to develop how surroundings provide ambitions, hopes, and dreams in life. The progression of thought from sentence to sentence is generally smooth and controlled, and the minor conventions errors do not interrupt the fluency of the composition. The writer's reflective comments in the conclusion (there's no script, there's no undo button) add depth and authenticity.

Imagination is important to how a person views their surroundings. If a person is creative, then their surroundings reflect their creativity. All the feelings and thoughts one can acquire about their environment are all conceived by imagination. I know without imagination, my world would be very dull.

My room, for instance, reflects my personal taste. In my room there are paintings of vibrant colors and abstract designs. It was my imagination that allowed me the vision to create suitable surroundings for myself. The effects of this decoration in my living place provide me with an uplifting feeling of warmth and security. It allows me a place to work and think peacefully. In so doing, my work becomes of better quality, and my life becomes affected with a positive step in the right direction.

My house can be called an acquired taste. The house was not of my own personal choosing, but it does fit me well enough to provide me with happiness. The house is my fortress from the world, giving me shelter and keeping me safe. It's size and shape can give me a sort of pride in knowing it is larger than all my friends' houses. In the end, it is not just the house, but the way I view the house,

that affects my life.

The city I live in plays an important role in my life. It can fill me with pride to say I am from here, or embarrassment. This city has been my surroundings for the majority of my life. The city's trees and landscape help me appreciate the life and land we have been given. Its buildings have allowed my imagination to soar as high as the tallest one. I can not say that I do not feel love for my city because that would be a lie, and lies are poor use of imagination.

No surroundings can far exceed the imagination of a person's mind. In fact, few things can affect my life more than my own mind. However, it is often my surroundings that make me feel and think the things I do. In turn, my surroundings have been, more times than not, a direct result of how I feel. My experience has been, that how you feel and your surroundings usually are very similar.

**Score Point: 3**

In the introduction the writer presents the idea that imagination is important to how people view their surroundings and sustains focus on this theme throughout the composition. The progression of ideas moves logically from the room to the house and the city of the writer. Effective word choice (in my room are paintings of vibrant colors and abstract designs, the house is my fortress from the world, its buildings have allowed my imagination to soar as high as the tallest one) not only adds some depth but also contributes to the authentic tone of this unique composition.

Where you are raised or located can affect your way of life but, truly, destiny is not based on your surroundings. Yes, it can limit or increase opportunities for success, however, location can only affect you if you let it. Basically, your determination & purpose are all that help you achieve anything.

The middle class in America today is incredibly spoiled. They live for the moment, seeking pleasure & entertainment, always wanting more. While some use all they have been blessed with to their advantage, others do not. Every year, we see spoiled teens driving up to some of the finest universities in the US with daddy's Porsche, only to come home months later, flunked out of college because they partied too much. The hard-working, privileged kids with integrity, though, take a different path. They get a good education and grow up to be men and women who change our world & inspire those less fortunate to succeed.

On the other hand, a number of people are not so lucky. They have to work hard to have enough money to get through the month and worry about more important things than getting a

stain on their brand new Abercrombie skirt. When people are so wealthy they worry about such trivial things you feel sorry for them because they have a hard time grasping what's important in life. Though those less privileged have an opportunity to stay focused on the simpler things, they also have many difficulties. They lack the funds to get a good education sometimes & can be prejudiced against for their status. They have to create their own destiny.

In conclusion, your surroundings only determine certain things about your life. Your success is only impeded if you let it be. No matter what situation you're placed in, you can make a difference if you never give up & don't let situation determine the person you are.

**Score Point: 3**

In the introduction, the writer presents the idea that you can overcome your destiny through determination and purpose and sustains focus on this philosophical theme throughout the composition. The comparison of various socio-economic groups that have allowed their circumstances to limit or increase their opportunities adds some depth as well as a sense of the writer's unique perspective (they have to worry about more important things than getting a stain on their brand new Abercrombie skirt). The coherence of the composition is further strengthened by an effective, thoughtful conclusion.

Do a person's surroundings affect who they are and who they will eventually become? This is a question that could be answered different ways and each answer could be right. In some instances a person's surroundings do affect them and in others they do not. It all really depends on the person.

Here is a story about two brothers who grew up in a bad part of town. Each brother reacted differently to his surroundings and each of them are at different places in their lives now.

Today and Alex ——— lived with their single mother in a small town house in what was considered a "bad" part of town. Today was the oldest and most outgoing. He hung out with his buddies on the street corner and was always getting into trouble. Alex was the total opposite of his brother. He made straight A's and seemed perfect in everyone's eyes.

Today wanted to do good like his younger brother but he could not ignore what was going on around him. If he saw guys on the street

corner smoking pot he was there with them. If the new bridge had not been "tagged" up by the local gangs he was there with the spray team. Whatever he seemed to do he was pulled into this lifestyle.

Alex knew what road his brother was on and tried to steer clear. He would go straight home from school everyday so he would not be sidetracked by the things around him.

Both of these situations went on for several years. Today Alex is a successful business owner, while Toby is serving time in jail for possession of marijuana.

Each boy was surrounded by the same things but each did different. The way that you are affected by your surroundings depends on you. You must make the best out of your situation.

**Score Point: 3**

The writer uses a story about two brothers to reflect on how you are affected by your surroundings and how it depends on the individual. This reflection is apparent in both the introduction and the conclusion, adding depth to the response. The composition has a sense of completeness, and the writer's good command of conventions adds to its overall fluency.

## SCORE POINT 4

EACH COMPOSITION AT THIS SCORE POINT IS A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WRITER'S IDEAS.

### *Focus and Coherence*

- Individual paragraphs and the composition as a whole are focused. This sustained focus enables the reader to understand and appreciate how the ideas included in the composition are related.
- The composition as a whole has a sense of completeness. The introduction and conclusion are meaningful because they add depth to the composition.
- Most, if not all, of the writing contributes to the development or quality of the composition as a whole.

### *Organization*

- The writer's progression of thought from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph is smooth and controlled. The writer's use of meaningful transitions and the logical movement from idea to idea strengthen this progression.
- The organizational strategy or strategies the writer chooses enhance the writer's ability to present ideas clearly and effectively.

### *Development of Ideas*

- The writer's thorough and specific development of each idea creates depth of thought in the composition, enabling the reader to truly understand and appreciate the writer's ideas.
- The writer's presentation of ideas is thoughtful or insightful. The writer may approach the topic from an unusual perspective, use his/her unique experiences or view of the world as a basis for writing, or make interesting connections between ideas. In all these cases, the writer's willingness to take compositional risks enhances the quality of the content.

### *Voice*

- The writer engages the reader and sustains this connection throughout the composition.
- The composition sounds authentic and original. The writer is able to express his/her individuality or unique perspective.

### *Conventions*

- The overall strength of the conventions contributes to the effectiveness of the composition. The writer demonstrates a consistent command of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure. When the writer attempts to communicate complex ideas through sophisticated forms of expression, he/she may make minor errors as a result of these compositional risks. These types of errors do not detract from the overall fluency of the composition.
- The words, phrases, and sentence structures the writer uses enhance the overall effectiveness of the communication of ideas.

Have you ever been forced to move away from home? What we call home is a precious thing. From the beautiful flowers growing along the roads where we live to the people we know and love, all are a part of our lives and our home. A few years back, my family was forced to move away from our home. My father's career stationed him away from our wonderful 4 bedroom house in east Texas to a much smaller 2 bedroom one in — county, west Texas.

Having lived my entire life under the shade trees of east Texas, I had mixed feelings about leaving my home. My brother and I had never had to share a room before but due to the shortage of living places in that area we had to be content and share a room.

After living in a little town I had never before heard of, I began realizing what all I had taken for granted back home. I exchanged my ground shade trees and days spent at the lake for a vast desert terrain and an endless supply of cactus. I missed my friends and our explorations down at the creek. The cool clear water and occasional drizzles of rain were all replaced with a hot dry heat and endless mountains.

At the time we moved I really didn't know how much those things had meant to me. Of

course I made new friends and even began becoming accustomed to my new way of life, however, I always knew in my heart that nothing could be the same as home. The people in our community were nice enough, always asking questions and wanting to know what my old home was like. I described the plant life to them and told them of my friends. I knew though, that they had never had the luxury of seeing these things for themselves or even had been able to play in the fall leaves. I missed my home; I was homesick.

Within a little more than a year later my father was able to ask for a transfer home. I was saddened to be leaving my new friends, people whom I shall never forget, but I was deep down relieved that I was finally, once-again getting to come home. Not a day goes by that I do not look around myself and am grateful for what I have, because you never know when you might just have to pick-up and leave everything all behind.

**Score Point: 4**

In this focused composition, the writer reflects on the changes brought about by a transfer from the more hospitable environment of east Texas to the harsher climate of west Texas. Reflecting on the adjustments to be made, including living spaces as well as adapting to new friends, adds thoughtfulness and depth to this engaging composition. The writer's expressive language (I exchanged my grand shade trees and days spent at the lake for a vast desert terrain and an endless supply of cactus) clearly shows individuality and adds to the strong sense of voice.

Throughout life, we experience many different surroundings. Each of these impact and affect our life in different ways. The surroundings that we grow up in shape the way we experience life. Most often, though, the experiences and surroundings in life that change us in some way will be the most influential on our outlook on life.

It is easy to see how our everyday surroundings affect us. For instance, someone living in an urban area would be very well acquainted with industrialism, highways, and shopping complexes. On the other hand, one living in the wilderness would be more directly influenced by the unpredictable effects of nature. A life with primitive tools and little or no materialism would be common.

When a person encounters something unusual and different from their everyday surroundings, a profound change occurs in the way they view the world. For example, when an unexpected natural disaster strikes, one who experiences it would be more directly influenced by the unpredictable effects of nature. In the story, "Brian's Return," this is exactly what happened to Brian. He had been living in the wilderness for a while, and he was so accustomed to his daily routine of camping in the woods, he had developed a false sense of safety and comfort. For this reason, he was not prepared when the storm came, ripping through his tent, throwing all of his equipment around. Because he hadn't staked down his tent, he suffered many injuries. This event changed his viewpoint of nature, however, so that he now believes that you must "expect the unexpected" and respect nature's great force.

In a less extreme way, my life was changed by a single camping trip. My first camping/fishing trip was when I was seven. My dad took my brother and me to Horseshoe State Park in Mississippi and we set up camp in a small clearing by a lake. We didn't use manmade rods so we had to learn how to make them using sticks and some twine. I learned so much from this trip and gained such a deep respect for nature that I haven't been the same since. The wildlife and plants we saw were so beautiful and intriguing. It was an extremely moving experience that had the same effect on me as Willow Creek did on the narrator of the story, "Willow Creek." Just as seeing fish swimming under the frozen ice and hearing the geese struggle to land in the fog formed the narrator's passion for "all things wild," everything I saw and experienced on that one camping trip when I was a kid made me love wilderness, too.

As you can see, it is not only your everyday surroundings that affect your life. One unexpected experience can change you internally. One storm, one brief encounter with wilderness, can change you, creating a passion and awe inside of you that wasn't there before.

**Score Point: 4**

The writer successfully combines a personal anecdote about a camping trip with analysis of the literary and expository selections to support the theme that it is not only everyday surroundings that affect your life but also unexpected experiences. Within each paragraph the writer's progression of thought is smooth and controlled, with every sentence contributing to the development as a whole. Consistent control of conventions, including the effective use of language (a life with primitive tools and little or no materialism; creating a passion and awe inside of you), enhances the presentation of the writer's ideas.