

Grade 5 – Personal Narrative Writing Work Sample: Exceeds

Task: Your class is studying about oceans and animals that live in these oceans. You are given three resources about whales. Read the sources carefully so you can write a story about a family that goes on vacation to a place right by the ocean. They go out on a boat ride and spot a huge creature coming out of the water. It's a whale! Tell the story of what happens when the family sees the whale. When writing your story, find ways to use information and details from the sources to improve your story.

Scores, Justification of Student Evidence, and Suggested Areas of Student Improvement

Ideas and Content: 6

The student's writing demonstrates strong storytelling skills, excellent development of ideas, and detailed whale-related facts. The story is engaging, well-structured, and enriched with vivid descriptions and accurate scientific information.

Evidence from Student Work: Ideas and Content	
✓ The Story Has a Well-Developed and Engaging Narrative	○ The student creates a clear setting and builds tension with the fog, adding to the story's atmosphere. ○ Example: <i>"The morning had been bright and clear, but now, a thick layer of fog rolled in over the ocean."</i> ○ This detail adds mystery and intrigue to the whale encounter.
✓ The Whale Encounter Is Descriptive and Dynamic	○ The student shows excitement and movement in the whale sighting rather than just telling. ○ Example: <i>"Before anyone could speak, the water exploded with movement. Several humpback whales burst through the surface at once, their huge mouths wide open."</i> ○ The word choice makes the moment feel dramatic and immersive.
✓ The Story Includes Relevant and Well-Integrated Whale Facts	○ The student accurately explains bubble-net feeding and whale communication in a natural way. ○ Example: <i>"You just saw bubble-net feeding! The whales blow bubbles to trap fish, then rise up and gulp them down."</i> ○ This scientific detail enhances the realism of the story without disrupting the narrative.
✓ The Ending Feels Reflective and Meaningful	○ The student wraps up the story with character reflection, making the experience feel impactful. ○ Example: <i>"As they reached the dock, Eli and Sophia exchanged excited glances. They knew this was a trip they would never forget."</i> ○ This ending reinforces the theme of wonder and discovery.

Organization: 5

The student's writing demonstrates a strong, well-structured narrative with excellent pacing, smooth transitions, and a satisfying conclusion. The story flows seamlessly, keeping the reader engaged from start to finish.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	
✓ The Beginning Hooks the Reader and Establishes the Setting	○ The student starts with a vivid description that builds curiosity and anticipation. ○ Example: <i>"The morning had been bright and clear, but now, a thick layer of fog rolled in over the ocean."</i> ○ This opening draws the reader in by creating a sense of mystery.
✓ Events Unfold in a Logical, Engaging Sequence	○ The story moves smoothly from anticipation to action, making the whale sighting feel natural and well-paced. ○ Example: <i>"At first, the ocean was quiet—too quiet. Then, Eli spotted something. A disturbance in the water. Before anyone could speak, the water exploded with movement."</i> ○ This gradual buildup keeps the reader engaged and eager to see what happens next.

Evidence from Student Work: Organization	
✓ Transitions Are Smooth and Natural	○ The student uses transition words and phrases effectively to connect ideas. ○ Example: <i>"Just as they were about to give up, a sound echoed across the water—a deep, haunting call."</i> ○ This smoothly connects the calm before the excitement with the dramatic whale appearance.
✓ The Ending Provides Closure and Reflection	○ The student wraps up the story with a meaningful reflection from the characters. ○ Example: <i>"Eli and Sophia exchanged excited glances. They knew this was a trip they would never forget."</i> ○ This ending reinforces the theme of wonder and leaves the reader with a sense of satisfaction.

Voice: 5

The student's writing demonstrates a lively, engaging, and authentic voice that draws the reader into the story. The tone is captivating, and the characters' excitement and awe are strongly conveyed, making the whale encounter feel immersive and memorable.

Evidence from Student Work: Voice	
✓ The Writing Feels Natural and Expressive	○ The student uses a conversational yet descriptive tone that enhances the storytelling. ○ Example: <i>"Eli's heart pounded. He gripped the railing as the water below churned. 'This is unreal,' he whispered."</i> ○ This reaction feels authentic and helps the reader connect with the character's emotions.
✓ The Writer's Enthusiasm for the Topic Is Clear	○ The descriptions show excitement and appreciation for whales. ○ Example: <i>"The orcas moved together like a well-rehearsed ballet, their sleek black and white bodies slicing through the waves."</i> ○ The poetic comparison makes the moment feel magical and awe-inspiring.
✓ Dialogue Enhances the Personality of the Characters	○ The characters' spoken words sound natural and engaging. ○ Example: <i>"'You just saw bubble-net feeding!' Uncle James grinned. 'That's something few people ever get to witness in real life.'"</i> ○ This moment adds authenticity and highlights the significance of the event.
✓ The Writing Evokes a Sense of Wonder	○ The story captures the characters' amazement and makes the reader feel part of the experience. ○ Example: <i>"Eli stared into the endless blue of the ocean. He had never felt so small... or so alive."</i> ○ This reflection adds depth and emotion to the story's conclusion.

Word Choice: 5

The student's writing demonstrates precise, vivid, and engaging word choice that enhances the storytelling and makes the whale encounter feel real. The use of descriptive verbs, sensory details, and figurative language helps immerse the reader in the experience.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	
✓ Strong, Vivid Verbs Make the Action More Dynamic	○ The student chooses action-packed words instead of simple ones, making the scene feel alive. ○ Example: <i>"The water exploded with movement as several humpback whales burst through the surface, their enormous mouths wide open."</i> ○ The words "exploded" and "burst" add energy and excitement to the scene.

Evidence from Student Work: Word Choice	
✓ Sensory Details Bring the Story to Life	○ The student includes descriptions that appeal to sight, sound, and touch. ○ Example: <i>"A salty breeze stung Eli's face as he leaned over the railing, the mist from the ocean clinging to his skin."</i> ○ The inclusion of touch and smell makes the moment feel real to the reader.
✓ Precise and Varied Word Choice	○ The student avoids repetition and uses a variety of words to describe the scene. ○ Example: <i>"The orcas glided effortlessly through the waves, their dorsal fins cutting through the water like sleek knives."</i> ○ This avoids overused words like "swam" and instead paints a more vivid picture.
✓ Use of Figurative Language Enhances the Writing	○ The student includes metaphors and similes that make descriptions more engaging. ○ Example: <i>"The ocean stretched before them like an endless sheet of glass, rippling only where the whales surfaced."</i> ○ This comparison creates a beautiful visual that makes the scene more memorable.

Sentence Fluency: 5

The student's writing demonstrates smooth, varied, and engaging sentence structures, creating a rhythm that makes the story easy and enjoyable to read. The combination of short, impactful sentences and longer, flowing descriptions enhances the storytelling.

Evidence from Student Work: Sentence Fluency	
✓ Short Sentences Add Emphasis Where Needed	○ The student uses short sentences strategically to heighten key moments. ○ Example: <i>"Then, the ocean came alive."</i> ○ This simple sentence creates anticipation before the action unfolds.
✓ Sentences Flow Naturally and Read Smoothly Aloud	○ The writing does not feel choppy or repetitive; it has a natural rhythm that guides the reader through the experience. ○ Example: <i>"For a moment, the ocean was still. Then, a shadow moved beneath the waves. Without warning, the water erupted, and a massive humpback whale soared into the air."</i> ○ The mix of sentence lengths builds suspense and excitement.
✓ Sentence Variety Enhances the Story	○ The student avoids repetitive structures and varies how sentences begin and are formed. ○ Example: <i>"A haunting call echoed across the water. Eli's breath caught in his throat. The guide grinned. 'That, my friends, is the sound of a whale.'"</i> ○ This mix of short and longer sentences keeps the pacing dynamic and engaging.
✓ Effective Use of Punctuation and Pauses	○ The student uses commas, dashes, and dialogue punctuation correctly, improving the natural feel of the writing. ○ Example: <i>"A pod of orcas moved in perfect harmony—silent, swift, powerful."</i> ○ The dash effectively adds emphasis, creating a dramatic pause.

Conventions: 5

The student's writing demonstrates strong command of grammar, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization, with minimal to no errors. The story is polished, easy to read, and flows naturally without distractions from mechanical mistakes.

Evidence from Student Work: Conventions	
✓ Spelling Is Accurate and Well-Edited	○ No major spelling errors are present, and all words appear correctly spelled and appropriate for the grade level.
✓ Capitalization Is Correct Throughout the Story	○ Proper nouns (e.g., <i>Puget Sound</i>, <i>Uncle James</i>, <i>Eli</i>, <i>Sophia</i>) are capitalized correctly.
✓ Punctuation Is Used Correctly, Including Dialogue Punctuation	○ The student correctly uses commas, quotation marks, and end punctuation in dialogue. ○ Example: <i>"'You just saw bubble-net feeding!' Uncle James grinned. 'That's something few people ever get to witness in real life.'"</i> ○ The placement of commas and quotation marks follows correct dialogue formatting.
✓ Grammar Is Strong and Free of Major Errors	○ The student uses correct subject-verb agreement, tense consistency, and sentence structure throughout the story. ○ Example: <i>"Eli and Sophia gripped the railing, watching in awe as the whales surfaced one after another."</i> ○ There are no grammar errors, and the sentence reads smoothly.