

# 4

## Sample Assessment Tasks and Student Responses

To give readers some familiarity with what students are asked to do on the NAEP writing assessment and how their writing is evaluated, this chapter presents sample writing tasks and student responses from the NAEP 2002 writing assessment (“tasks” are the topics students are given to write about). Sample tasks for all three writing purposes specified by the NAEP writing framework—narrative, informative, and persuasive—are given for grades 4, 8, and 12. The nine tasks discussed in the report have been released from the writing assessment so they can be shared with the public in this and other NAEP reports. NAEP does not release the whole writing assessment for any given assessment year because a sufficient number of writing tasks must be retained for use in future assessments; re-using tasks used in previous assessment years enables NAEP to measure trends in writing achievement over time.

Sample responses to the nine tasks are accompanied by both a summary of the scoring criteria used to determine their rating and their actual assigned ratings on the six-level scoring rubric—“Excellent,” “Skillful,” “Sufficient,” “Uneven,” “Insufficient,” or “Unsatisfactory.” The sample responses in this chapter represent “Uneven” and higher levels of writing. Additional tasks and responses as well as student performance data from previous NAEP writing assessments may be viewed on the NAEP web site at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/itmrls>.

To indicate how difficult the sample tasks were for students, each task in this chapter is accompanied by a table presenting two types of performance data: the overall percentages of students whose responses were scored “Uneven or better,” “Skillful or better,” and “Excellent,” and the percentages of students who scored within specific score ranges on the NAEP writing scale. The score ranges correspond to the three achievement level intervals—*Basic*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced*—as well as the range below *Basic*.

All students who took the assessment were given brochures that provided suggestions for planning and reviewing their writing; the writing brochures for grades 4, 8, and 12 are reprinted in this chapter, following the presentation of student responses.

This chapter concludes with item maps that show where sample responses at different levels fall on the NAEP writing scale. For each writing task discussed in this report, the item maps display the points on the writing scale at which students are considered to have the skill to write a response of the indicated quality.

### **Narrative, Informative, and Persuasive Writing**

In specifying that students must write narratives, informative essays, and persuasive pieces, the NAEP writing framework ensures that students taking the assessment will have the opportunity to develop and organize ideas, use language effectively, and demonstrate awareness of audience for a range of writing purposes. This section describes what students at grades 4, 8, and 12 were able to accomplish when writing for all three purposes.

### **Narrative Writing: Weaving a Story**

How do writers tell a story? The storyteller weaves plot, character, language, and detail into a whole to create a narrative. To engage students in creating narratives for the NAEP writing assessment, students across grades 4, 8, and 12 were presented with a range of tasks and kinds of stimuli, including drawings, cartoons, photographs, and, at grades 8 and 12, newspaper articles and quotations.

Narrative tasks like *Unusual Day* (released in this report) presented fourth-grade students with imaginative drawings, much like those from a children’s book. At grades 8 and 12, students were asked to write both first- and third-person narratives. The *President for a Day* task released in this report is an example of an eighth-grade first-person narrative. Twelfth-graders were sometimes asked to assume the voice of a character or to write in a particular genre. The twelfth-grade task featured in this report asked students to write a genre narrative, *Tall Tale*.

Student responses were scored for overall quality, with six-level scoring rubrics that used the following categories: “Excellent,” “Skillful,” “Sufficient,” “Uneven,” “Insufficient,” and “Unsatisfactory.” Within a grade, the same narrative scoring guide was used to score all narrative responses regardless of task, although raters were also made aware of the variety of responses characteristic of any given task.

Expectations for student writing increased with increasing grade level. For example, it was anticipated that students at grades 8 and 12 would write more controlled and lengthier pieces characterized by more complex sentences and more sophisticated word choices. Further, eighth- and twelfth-grade students usually provided substantially more developed narrative plots than did fourth-graders. In “Skillful” or “Excellent” responses, students at grades 8 and 12 were generally more able at using narrative techniques to interweave event and characterization and to experiment with precise language that increased the effectiveness of their stories.

However, it is accurate to say that across grades 4, 8, and 12, narrative responses rated “Skillful” or “Excellent” were clearly developed with details, organized smoothly, and exhibited control over sentence structure and mechanics. Such responses occasionally used dialogue to develop character or experimented with suspense. Stories rated “Sufficient” provided a clear sequence of events, but lacked a high level of development, used very simple language and sentence structure throughout the response, and/or occasionally made abrupt shifts in time or place. In responses rated “Uneven,” abrupt shifts and errors tended to impede the story’s progress, even though many of the writers of “Uneven” responses still attempted a complete story. “Uneven” stories often had the outlines of a story, but were weakened by repetition, uneven development, or problems in controlling sentence structure. Narratives rated “Insufficient” or “Unsatisfactory” were often marked by extreme brevity or lack of control over standard written English.

## **Informative Writing: Describing and Explaining**

Informative writing requires a clear, organized presentation of information about a subject understood by the writer. Informative writing tasks varied among the grades.

In most fourth-grade tasks, students were asked to write about familiar subjects. *Lunchtime* (released in this report) is one such subject. At the eighth and twelfth grades, students were given new information to assimilate and present (in charts, pictures, or letters) and were asked to write for a greater variety of audiences (such as a school board or friend). Some tasks required older students to draw from background knowledge. In the case of the *Save a Book* task, discussed in this report for both eighth- and twelfth-graders, the task is to describe a particular book worth saving for posterity.

As with narrative responses, student informative responses were scored with a 6-level guide that was the same for all informative tasks within a grade. Again, expectations were higher the older the students were. Fourth-graders who wrote “Skillful” and “Excellent” responses developed ideas with specific details and organized them clearly (e.g., through comparison and contrast). In responses rated “Skillful” or “Excellent,” eighth- and twelfth-grade students developed information fully with details and organized it well, using clear transitions to link sections. Twelfth-graders often gave more detailed accounts of things read, studied, or experienced than eighth-graders. At grade 12 especially, higher-level responses exhibited mastery over sophisticated sentence structure and word use.

“Sufficient” responses across grades presented a clear sequence of information, but with ideas that were only generally related. Eighth- and twelfth-graders who wrote “Sufficient” responses organized information but did not elaborate on details or provide a clear structure to guide the reader through the information. “Uneven” responses at grades 4, 8, and 12 presented some information, but not in a clear sequence or with patchy development. Informative essays scored “Insufficient” or “Unsatisfactory” were, like narrative responses at these levels, extremely undeveloped or lacking in control over sentence structure and word usage.

### **Persuasive Writing: Convincing the Reader**

As stated in the NAEP writing framework, the primary aim of persuasive writing “. . . is to influence others to take some action or bring about change. . . . This type of writing involves a clear awareness of what arguments might most affect the audience being addressed.”<sup>1</sup> To engage students in writing persuasively for the NAEP assessment, every attempt was made

to design tasks relevant to students’ experiences so that students could craft responses with a meaningful sense of audience. A variety of stimuli were used, frequently text-based, although at grade 4 these were limited to short letters, while at grades 8 and 12 lengthier articles were employed.

The grade 4 persuasive task in this report, *Library Book*, required students to write a letter to the school librarian convincing him or her to reacquire a particular book for the school library. The *School Schedule* task released in this report asked eighth-graders to respond to a newspaper article by writing to their principal defending their position on changing school hours. Most twelfth-grade persuasive tasks broadened the writing context beyond the classroom orientation of fourth-grade tasks and the school orientation of the eighth-grade tasks. Tasks ranged from letters to an editor to debates on the merits of particular social changes. The *Heroes* task presented in this chapter asked students to define heroism and provide specific examples of celebrities and/or people from their community to illustrate and support their definitions.

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<sup>1</sup> National Assessment Governing Board. (1998). *Writing Framework and Specifications for the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress*, p. 7. Washington, DC: Author.

Student persuasive responses were scored with a 6-level guide that varied slightly by grade. In responses rated “Skillful” or “Excellent,” fourth-graders took clear positions, offering clear support for their positions with reasons or examples. At eighth grade, in contrast to fourth grade, in “Skillful” and “Excellent” responses, students went beyond providing evidence or simple reasons for a position to develop a complete argument with appropriate details. In twelfth-grade persuasive writing rated “Skillful” and “Excellent,” students constructed coherent arguments throughout their responses. Some students carefully weighed both sides of an issue before choosing one. While students across grades at the highest levels used rhetorical strategies such as humor, repetition, or rhetorical questions to appeal to an audience, such devices were used most often and most skillfully at grade 12.

As with informative writing, “Sufficient” responses at grades 4, 8, and 12 tended to be simple and somewhat undeveloped. Such responses clearly stated a position and provided some support, but were only generally organized, and, at grades 8 and 12, lacked clear transitions among ideas. At all three grades, students whose responses were

rated “Uneven” provided a clear position but offered unclear, undeveloped, or disjointed support, and/or were characterized by errors that at times impeded understanding. Responses rated “Insufficient” or “Unsatisfactory” were very undeveloped or lacking in control over sentence structure and word usage.

## **Evaluating Student Responses**

This section presents the scoring guides used in the writing assessment, sample tasks at each grade, and student responses rated “Uneven,” “Skillful,” and “Excellent” on the writing scoring guides for each task type at each of grades 4, 8, and 12. Displaying sample responses of these three ratings will enable readers to better understand how NAEP scores student writing to distinguish between upper-level writing (“Sufficient” and above) and lower-level writing (“Uneven” and below). Both the scoring guides and the tasks were designed to reflect appropriate expectations for the assessed grade levels, and the sample tasks illustrate the three kinds of writing at each grade level. The frequency of the three kinds of writing included in the assessment at each grade is based on the emphases they receive in instruction as discussed in the NAEP writing framework.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> National Assessment Governing Board. (1998). *Writing Framework and Specifications for the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress*, p. 48. Washington, DC: Author.

**6 Excellent Response**

- Tells a well-developed story with relevant descriptive details across the response.
- Events are well connected and tie the story together with transitions across the response.
- Sustains varied sentence structure and exhibits specific word choices.
- Exhibits control over sentence boundaries; errors in grammar, spelling, and mechanics do not interfere with understanding.

**5 Skillful Response**

- Tells a clear story with some development, including some relevant descriptive details.
- Events are connected in much of the response; may lack some transitions.
- Exhibits some variety in sentence structure and exhibits some specific word choices.
- Generally exhibits control over sentence boundaries; errors in grammar, spelling, and mechanics do not interfere with understanding.

**4 Sufficient Response**

- Tells a clear story with little development; has few details.
- Events are generally related; may contain brief digressions or inconsistencies.
- Generally has simple sentences and simple word choice; may exhibit uneven control over sentence boundaries.
- Has sentences that consist mostly of complete, clear, distinct thoughts; errors in grammar, spelling, and mechanics generally do not interfere with understanding.

**3 Uneven Response** (may be characterized by one or more of the following)

- Attempts to tell a story, but tells only part of a story, gives a plan for a story, or is list-like.
- Lacks a clear progression of events; elements may not fit together or be in sequence.
- Exhibits uneven control over sentence boundaries and may have some inaccurate word choices.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and mechanics sometimes interfere with understanding.

**2 Insufficient Response** (may be characterized by one or more of the following)

- Attempts a response, but is no more than a fragment or the beginning of a story OR is very repetitive.
- Is very disorganized OR too brief to detect organization.
- Exhibits little control over sentence boundaries and sentence formation; word choice is inaccurate in much of the response.
- Characterized by misspellings, missing words, incorrect word order; errors in grammar, spelling, and mechanics are severe enough to make understanding very difficult in much of the response.

**1 Unsatisfactory Response** (may be characterized by one or more of the following)

- Attempts a response, but may only paraphrase the task or be extremely brief.
- Exhibits no control over organization.
- Exhibits no control over sentence formation; word choice is inaccurate across the response.
- Characterized by misspellings, missing words, incorrect word order; errors in grammar, spelling, and mechanics severely impede understanding across response.

**6 Excellent Response**

- Develops ideas well and uses specific, relevant details across the response.
- Is well organized with clear transitions.
- Sustains varied sentence structure and exhibits specific word choices.
- Exhibits control over sentence boundaries; errors in grammar, spelling, and mechanics do not interfere with understanding.

**5 Skillful Response**

- Develops ideas with some specific, relevant details.
- Is clearly organized; information is presented in an orderly way, but response may lack transitions.
- Exhibits some variety in sentence structure and exhibits some specific word choices.
- Generally exhibits control over sentence boundaries; errors in grammar, spelling, and mechanics do not interfere with understanding.

**4 Sufficient Response**

- Clear but sparsely developed; may have few details.
- Provides a clear sequence of information; provides pieces of information that are generally related to each other.
- Generally has simple sentences and simple word choice; may exhibit uneven control over sentence boundaries.
- Has sentences that consist mostly of complete, clear, distinct thoughts; errors in grammar, spelling, and mechanics generally do not interfere with understanding.

**3 Uneven Response** (may be characterized by one or more of the following)

- Provides limited or incomplete information; may be list-like or have the quality of an outline.
- Is disorganized or provides a disjointed sequence of information.
- Exhibits uneven control over sentence boundaries and may have some inaccurate word choices.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and mechanics sometimes interfere with understanding.

**2 Insufficient Response** (may be characterized by one or more of the following)

- Provides little information and makes little attempt at development.
- Is very disorganized OR too brief to detect organization.
- Exhibits little control over sentence boundaries and sentence formation; word choice is inaccurate in much of the response.
- Characterized by misspellings, missing words, incorrect word order; errors in grammar, spelling, and mechanics are severe enough to make understanding very difficult in much of the response.

**1 Unsatisfactory Response** (may be characterized by one or more of the following)

- Attempts a response, but may only paraphrase the task or be extremely brief.
- Exhibits no control over organization.
- Exhibits no control over sentence formation; word choice is inaccurate across the response.
- Characterized by misspellings, missing words, incorrect word order; errors in grammar, spelling, and mechanics severely impede understanding across the response.

**6 Excellent Response**

- Takes a clear position and develops support with well-chosen details, reasons, or examples across the response.
- Is well organized; maintains focus.
- Sustains varied sentence structure and exhibits specific word choices.
- Exhibits control over sentence boundaries; errors in grammar, spelling, and mechanics do not interfere with understanding.

**5 Skillful Response**

- Takes a clear position and develops support with some specific details, reasons, or examples.
- Provides some organization of ideas by, for example, using contrast or building to a point.
- Exhibits some variety in sentence structure and exhibits some specific word choices.
- Generally exhibits control over sentence boundaries; errors in grammar, spelling, and mechanics do not interfere with understanding.

**4 Sufficient Response**

- Takes a clear position with support that is clear and generally related to the issue.
- Is generally organized.
- Generally has simple sentences and simple word choice; may exhibit uneven control over sentence boundaries.
- Has sentences that consist mostly of complete, clear, distinct thoughts; errors in grammar, spelling, and mechanics generally do not interfere with understanding.

**3 Uneven Response** (may be characterized by one or more of the following)

- Takes a position and offers limited or incomplete support; some reasons may not be clear or related to the issue.
- Is disorganized OR provides a disjointed sequence of information.
- Exhibits uneven control over sentence boundaries and may have some inaccurate word choices.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and mechanics sometimes interfere with understanding.

**2 Insufficient Response** (may be characterized by one or more of the following)

- Takes a position, but provides only minimal support (generalizations or a specific reason or example); OR attempts to take a position but the position is unclear.
- Is very disorganized or too brief to detect organization.
- May exhibit little control over sentence boundaries and sentence formation; word choice is inaccurate in much of the response.
- Characterized by misspellings, missing words, incorrect word order; errors in grammar, spelling, and mechanics may be severe enough to make understanding very difficult in much of the response.

**1 Unsatisfactory Response** (may be characterized by one or more of the following)

- Takes a position, but provides no support OR attempts to take a position (is on topic), but position is very unclear; may only paraphrase the task.
- Exhibits no control over organization.
- Exhibits no control over sentence formation; word choice is inaccurate across the response.
- Characterized by misspellings, missing words, incorrect word order; errors in grammar, spelling, and mechanics severely impede understanding across response.

**6 Excellent Response**

- Tells a clear story that is well developed and shaped with well-chosen details across the response.
- Is well organized with strong transitions.
- Sustains variety in sentence structure and exhibits good word choice.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation are few and do not interfere with understanding.

**5 Skillful Response**

- Tells a clear story that is developed and shaped with details in parts of the response.
- Is clearly organized, but may lack some transitions and/or have occasional lapses in continuity.
- Exhibits some variety in sentence structure and some good word choices.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation do not interfere with understanding.

**4 Sufficient Response**

- Tells a clear story that is developed with some details.
- The parts of the story are generally related, but there are few or no transitions.
- Exhibits control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure, but sentences and word choice may be simple and unvaried.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation do not interfere with understanding.

**3 Uneven Response** (may be characterized by one or more of the following)

- Attempts to tell a story, but parts of the story are unclear, undeveloped, list-like, or repetitive OR offers no more than a well-written beginning.
- Is unevenly organized; parts of the story may be unrelated to one another.
- Exhibits uneven control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; may have some inaccurate word choices.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation sometimes interfere with understanding.

**2 Insufficient Response** (may be characterized by one or more of the following)

- Attempts to tell a story, but the attempt may be a fragment and/or very undeveloped.
- Is very disorganized throughout the response OR too brief to detect organization.
- Minimal control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; word choice may often be inaccurate.
- Errors in grammar or usage (such as missing words or incorrect word use or word order), spelling, and punctuation interfere with understanding in much of the response.

**1 Unsatisfactory Response** (may be characterized by one or more of the following)

- Responds to task, but provides little or no coherent content OR merely paraphrases the task.
- Has no apparent organization OR consists of a single statement.
- Minimal or no control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; word choice may be inaccurate in much or all of the response.
- A multiplicity of errors in grammar or usage (such as missing words or incorrect word use or word order), spelling, and punctuation severely impedes understanding across the response.

**6 Excellent Response**

- Develops and shapes information with well-chosen details across the response.
- Is well organized with strong transitions.
- Sustains variety in sentence structure and exhibits good word choice.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation are few and do not interfere with understanding.

**5 Skillful Response**

- Develops and shapes information with details in parts of the response.
- Is clearly organized, but may lack some transitions and/or have occasional lapses in continuity.
- Exhibits some variety in sentence structure and some good word choices.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation do not interfere with understanding.

**4 Sufficient Response**

- Develops information with some details.
- Organized with ideas that are generally related, but has few or no transitions.
- Exhibits control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure, but sentences and word choice may be simple and unvaried.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation do not interfere with understanding.

**3 Uneven Response** (may be characterized by one or more of the following)

- Presents some clear information, but is list-like, undeveloped, or repetitive OR offers no more than a well-written beginning.
- Is unevenly organized; the response may be disjointed.
- Exhibits uneven control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; may have some inaccurate word choices.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation sometimes interfere with understanding.

**2 Insufficient Response** (may be characterized by one or more of the following)

- Presents fragmented information OR may be very repetitive OR may be very undeveloped.
- Is very disorganized; thoughts are tenuously connected OR the response is too brief to detect organization.
- Minimal control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; word choice may often be inaccurate.
- Errors in grammar or usage (such as missing words or incorrect word use or word order), spelling, and punctuation interfere with understanding in much of the response.

**1 Unsatisfactory Response** (may be characterized by one or more of the following)

- Attempts to respond to task, but provides little or no coherent information; may only paraphrase the task.
- Has no apparent organization OR consists of a single statement.
- Minimal or no control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; word choice may be inaccurate in much or all of the response.
- A multiplicity of errors in grammar or usage (such as missing words or incorrect word use or word order), spelling, and punctuation severely impedes understanding across the response.

**6 Excellent Response**

- Takes a clear position and develops it consistently with well-chosen reasons and/or examples across the response.
- Is well organized with strong transitions.
- Sustains variety in sentence structure and exhibits good word choice.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation are few and do not interfere with understanding.

**5 Skillful Response**

- Takes a clear position and develops it with reasons and/or examples in parts of the response.
- Is clearly organized, but may lack some transitions and/or have occasional lapses in continuity.
- Exhibits some variety in sentence structure and some good word choices.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation do not interfere with understanding.

**4 Sufficient Response**

- Takes a clear position and supports it with some reasons and/or examples.
- Is organized with ideas that are generally related, but there are few or no transitions.
- Exhibits control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure, but sentences and word choice may be simple and unvaried.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation do not interfere with understanding.

**3 Uneven Response** (may be characterized by one or more of the following)

- Takes a position and offers support, but may be unclear, repetitive, list-like, or undeveloped.
- Is unevenly organized; the response may be disjointed.
- Exhibits uneven control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; may have some inaccurate word choices.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation sometimes interfere with understanding.

**2 Insufficient Response** (may be characterized by one or more of the following)

- Takes a position, but response may be very unclear, very undeveloped, or very repetitive.
- Is very disorganized; thoughts are tenuously connected OR the response is too brief to detect organization.
- Minimal control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; word choice may often be inaccurate.
- Errors in grammar or usage (such as missing words or incorrect word use or word order), spelling, and punctuation interfere with understanding in much of the response.

**1 Unsatisfactory Response** (may be characterized by one or more of the following)

- Attempts to take a position (addresses topic) but response is incoherent OR takes a position but provides no support; may only paraphrase the task.
- Has no apparent organization OR consists of a single statement.
- Minimal or no control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; word choice may be inaccurate in much or all of the response.
- A multiplicity of errors in grammar or usage (such as missing words or incorrect word use or word order), spelling, and punctuation severely impedes understanding across the response.

**6 Excellent Response**

- Tells a clear story that is consistently well developed and detailed; details enhance story being told.
- Is well organized; integrates narrative events into a smooth telling; effective transitions move the story forward.
- Consistently exhibits variety in sentence structure and precision in word choice.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation are few and do not interfere with understanding.

**5 Skillful Response**

- Tells a clear story that is well developed and elaborated with details in much of the response.
- Is well organized with story elements that are connected across most of the response; may have occasional lapses in transitions.
- Exhibits some variety in sentence structure and uses good word choice; occasionally, words may be used inaccurately.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation do not interfere with understanding.

**4 Sufficient Response**

- Tells a clear story that is developed with some pertinent details.
- Is generally organized, but transitions among parts of the story may be lacking.
- Sentence structure may be simple and unvaried; word choice is mostly accurate.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation do not interfere with understanding.

**3 Uneven Response** (may be characterized by one or more of the following)

- Tells a story that may be clear and developed in parts; other parts are unfocused, repetitive, or minimally developed OR response is no more than a well-written beginning.
- Is organized in parts of the response; other parts are disjointed and/or lack transitions.
- Exhibits uneven control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; may exhibit some inaccurate word choices.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation sometimes interfere with understanding.

**2 Insufficient Response** (may be characterized by one or more of the following)

- Attempts to tell a story, but is very undeveloped, list-like, or fragmentary.
- Is disorganized or unfocused in much of the response OR the response is too brief to detect organization.
- Minimal control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; word choice may often be inaccurate.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation interfere with understanding in much of the response.

**1 Unsatisfactory Response** (may be characterized by one or more of the following)

- Responds to task but provides little or no coherent content OR merely paraphrases the task.
- Has little or no apparent organization.
- Minimal or no control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; word choice may be inaccurate in much or all of the response.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation severely impede understanding across the response.

**6 Excellent Response**

- Information is presented effectively and consistently supported with well-chosen details.
- Is focused and well organized, with a sustained controlling idea and effective use of transitions.
- Consistently exhibits variety in sentence structure and precision in word choice.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation are few and do not interfere with understanding.

**5 Skillful Response**

- Information is presented clearly and supported with pertinent details in much of the response.
- Is well organized, but may lack some transitions.
- Exhibits some variety in sentence structure and uses good word choice; occasionally, words may be used inaccurately.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation do not interfere with understanding.

**4 Sufficient Response**

- Information is presented clearly and supported with some pertinent details.
- Is generally organized, but has few or no transitions among parts.
- Sentence structure may be simple and unvaried; word choice is mostly accurate.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation do not interfere with understanding.

**3 Uneven Response** (may be characterized by one or more of the following)

- Information is presented clearly in parts; other parts are undeveloped or repetitive OR response is no more than a well-written beginning.
- Is organized in parts of the response; other parts are disjointed and/or lack transitions.
- Exhibits uneven control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; may exhibit some inaccurate word choices.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation sometimes interfere with understanding.

**2 Insufficient Response** (may be characterized by one or more of the following)

- Provides information that is very undeveloped or list-like.
- Is disorganized or unfocused in much of the response OR the response is too brief to detect organization.
- Minimal control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; word choice may often be inaccurate.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation interfere with understanding in much of the response.

**1 Unsatisfactory Response** (may be characterized by one or more of the following)

- Responds to task, but may be incoherent OR provides very minimal information OR merely paraphrases the task.
- Exhibits little or no apparent organization.
- Minimal or no control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; word choice may be inaccurate in much or all of the response.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation severely impede understanding across the response.

**6 Excellent Response**

- Takes a clear position and supports it consistently with well-chosen reasons and/or examples; may use persuasive strategy to convey an argument.
- Is focused and well organized, with effective use of transitions.
- Consistently exhibits variety in sentence structure and precision in word choice.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation are few and do not interfere with understanding.

**5 Skillful Response**

- Takes a clear position and supports it with pertinent reasons and/or examples through much of the response.
- Is well organized, but may lack some transitions.
- Exhibits some variety in sentence structure and uses good word choice; occasionally, words may be used inaccurately.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation do not interfere with understanding.

**4 Sufficient Response**

- Takes a clear position and supports it with some pertinent reasons and/or examples; there is some development.
- Is generally organized, but has few or no transitions among parts.
- Sentence structure may be simple and unvaried; word choice is mostly accurate.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation do not interfere with understanding.

**3 Uneven Response** (may be characterized by one or more of the following)

- Takes a position and provides uneven support; may lack development in parts or be repetitive OR response is no more than a well-written beginning.
- Is organized in parts of the response; other parts are disjointed and/or lack transitions.
- Exhibits uneven control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; may exhibit some inaccurate word choices.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation sometimes interfere with understanding.

**2 Insufficient Response** (may be characterized by one or more of the following)

- Takes a position but response is very undeveloped.
- Is disorganized or unfocused in much of the response OR clear but very brief.
- Minimal control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; word choice may often be inaccurate.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation interfere with understanding in much of the response.

**1 Unsatisfactory Response** (may be characterized by one or more of the following)

- Attempts to take a position (addresses topic), but position is very unclear OR takes a position, but provides minimal or no support; may only paraphrase the task.
- Exhibits little or no apparent organization.
- Minimal or no control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; word choice may be inaccurate in much or all of the response.
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation severely impede understanding across the response.

## Grade 4 Sample Narrative Task and Student Responses

Grade 4

### Narrative: *Unusual Day*

*Unusual Day* presented students with a sequence of full-color, imaginative drawings designed to provide a framework for creating a narrative. Student responses were rated according to the 6-level grade 4 narrative scoring guide.

IMAGINE!

One morning you wake up and go down to breakfast.

This is what you see on the table.



You are surprised. Then . . .

...when you look out the window,  
this is what you see.



Write a story called "The Very Unusual Day" about what happens until you go to bed again.

**Table 4.1** Percentage scored “Uneven” or better for narrative writing task, by achievement level range, grade 4: 2002

Grade 4	Percentage “Uneven” or better				
	Overall percentage “Uneven” or better	Below <i>Basic</i> 114 or below <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Basic</i> 115–175 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Proficient</i> 176–224 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Advanced</i> 225 or above <sup>1</sup>
	87	37	90	100	100

<sup>1</sup> NAEP writing composite scale range.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

### Sample “Uneven” Response

“Uneven” responses often consisted of undeveloped lists of things the narrators of the stories saw in the stimulus pictures. The response below also exhibits typical “Uneven” response difficulties with sentence boundaries, grammar, and spelling that, at times, interfere with the attempt to tell the story. An “Uneven” or better rating for this task was assigned to 87 percent of the responses to the task, and “Uneven” or better responses map at the scale score 121.

The very Unusual day. When I got down stairs to the kitchen. I saw clouds on my plate and a rainbow in my cup. When I looked out the window. I saw stars on the street and people stepping on the stars. I saw two man caring stars. I saw star on the street lights. I saw pretty flowers. There were stars every where outside. So I went back to bed. I wonder about what happening tommrow.

**Table 4.2** Percentage scored “Skillful” or better for narrative writing task, by achievement level range, grade 4: 2002

Grade 4	Percentage “Skillful” or better				
	Overall percentage “Skillful” or better	Below <i>Basic</i> 114 or below <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Basic</i> 115–175 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Proficient</i> 176–224 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Advanced</i> 225 or above <sup>1</sup>
	18	#	6	46	93

# Percentage rounds to zero.  
<sup>1</sup> NAEP writing composite scale range.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

### Sample “Skillful” Response

In “Skillful” responses, students used details to develop their stories in parts of the response. They provided a clear structure to their stories, though with an occasional lack of transitions, as shown in the sample response. The “Skillful” or better rating was given to 18 percent of the responses to this task. These responses map at the scale score 202.

## The Very Unusual Day

One morning, I woke up to get my breakfast, and I couldn't believe it! on the table was salt and peppers, a glass of milk, a mug of hot cocoa... with half a rainbow coming out of it. Also a fork and knife and a plate with six clouds on it!! After that I went back upstairs to get dressed. When I looked out the window all over the streets were stars all over the street. Stars where on lighting pole used as a light bulb. I said to myself, What a very unusual day. That morning

I went to my friend's house but she was not home. So I walked back to my house. Right when I got in the phone rang. It was my friend, we talked all day until 8:00. I told her I had to go to sleep. Then it happened in front of my face outside. It started to rain small one inch stars. I went upstairs to get into my pajamas. After I went to sleep. The next morning when I went to eat breakfast on the table was orange juice, knife and fork, bacon and an omelet. Plus salt and pepper. When I went to look out the window everything was back to normal. Yesterday was a very Unusual Day.

**Table 4.3** Percentage scored “Excellent” for narrative writing task, by achievement level range, grade 4: 2002

Grade 4				
Overall percentage “Excellent”	Percentage “Excellent”			
	Below <i>Basic</i> 114 or below <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Basic</i> 115–175 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Proficient</i> 176–224 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Advanced</i> 225 or above <sup>1</sup>
4	#	#	9	52

# Percentage rounds to zero.

<sup>1</sup> NAEP writing composite scale range.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

### Sample “Excellent” Response

“Excellent” responses developed ideas with relevant details throughout the story and exhibited variety in sentence structure. In the response shown here, transitions guide the reader through the plot, and there are some very good specific word choices, such as “sharp edges” and “almost unthinkable.” The “Excellent” rating was given to 4 percent of the responses to this task. These responses map at the scale score 240.

Calandra woke up on Friday, April 2nd to what she thought would be a perfectly normal day. It actually wouldn't be. Calandra went down to breakfast. Instead of eggs and bacon, there were clouds on her plate. And a rainbow coming out of her hot chocolate. When Calandra looked out the window, she saw Mr. Bumble outside looking at the star mess that had fallen from the sky.

Calandra was careful not to step on the sharp edges when she went to school.

When school let out, Calandra wondered what would happen at her piano lessons. What did happen was almost unthinkable. Ms. Gretchen had her play the trumpet. Not only that, but Calandra liked it so much she decided to stay on the trumpet.

At 5:00 Calandra left to baby-sit Charolette Vren. And what could happen next other than the fact that Charolette's house was upside down. Calandra kept tripping.

At home, her house was ok, but dinner was topsy, turvy because it was steak and cereal.

Calandra had no homework, so she read. The book was printed upside down. So Calandra turned the book 90° but nothing changed. Weird she thought, as her bed turned and rested on the ceiling.

When Calandra woke up, everything was back to normal and it was Saturday.

## Grade 4 Sample Informative Task and Student Responses

### Grade 4

#### Informative: *Lunchtime*

To make this task accessible to all grade 4 students, *Lunchtime* asked them to describe an experience they have each day: lunchtime. Students responded by focusing on many different aspects of their lunchtime, including descriptions of physical environment, activities, and their feelings about lunchtime at their school. Percentages and scores below suggest that this informative task was more challenging for grade 4 students than the narrative task *Unusual Day*. Responses to this task were rated according to the 6-level, grade 4 informative scoring guide.

Describe what lunchtime is like for you on a school day. Be sure to tell about your lunchtime so that someone who has never had lunch with you on a school day can understand where you have lunch and what lunchtime is like.

**Table 4.4** Percentage scored “Uneven” or better for informative writing task, by achievement level range, grade 4: 2002

Grade 4		Percentage “Uneven” or better			
Overall percentage “Uneven” or better	Below <i>Basic</i> 114 or below <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Basic</i> 115–175 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Proficient</i> 176–224 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Advanced</i> 225 or above <sup>1</sup>	
88	48	92	100	100	

<sup>1</sup> NAEP writing composite scale range.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

**Sample “Uneven” Response**

“Uneven” responses provided incomplete and, at times, repetitive information and also exhibited problems with run-on sentences, as the response below shows. The “Uneven” or better rating was assigned to 88 percent of the responses to this task. These responses map at the scale score 112.

A day at lunch is when you come into a big room and you stand in line on one side of the room. When I go to this little room you stand in line. You have a choice of two kinds of food sometimes the food is nasty and sometimes its good you will have a fruit bar. You will go around the line then you have a seat and eat.

**Table 4.5** Percentage scored “Skillful” or better for informative writing task, by achievement level range, grade 4: 2002

Grade 4				
Percentage “Skillful” or better				
Overall percentage “Skillful” or better	Below <i>Basic</i> 114 or below <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Basic</i> 115–175 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Proficient</i> 176–224 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Advanced</i> 225 or above <sup>1</sup>
16	#	6	38	82

# Percentage rounds to zero.  
<sup>1</sup> NAEP writing composite scale range.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

### Sample “Skillful” Response

“Skillful” responses often provided clearly organized sequences of lunchtime activities. The response below does this with some well-chosen specific details, such as the reference to the lunch moms wiping off the tables. There is some sentence variety as well. However, the response lacks the development of an “Excellent” response. The “Skillful” or better rating was assigned to 16 percent of the responses to this task and such responses map at the scale score 216.

## Lunch Time

Lunch time in my school is very noisy, because everybody talks. The 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> graders at [Name of School] have to eat lunch at the same time. We all sit at tables that are set up in the gym, across half of the basketball court. We eat lunch every day from 11:45 am through 12:00pm. At lunch everyone eats and talks to their friends until the lunch-moms dismiss them so they can go to recess. When everybody has cleared out of the lunch room, the janitors and lunch moms wipe off the tables, just on time for the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders to come into the room for lunch. After lunch and recess I go back to my 4<sup>th</sup> grade classroom, which is in the basement. I like lunch time a lot - it's my favorite time of the day!

**Table 4.6** Percentage scored “Excellent” for informative writing task, by achievement level range, grade 4: 2002

**Grade 4**

Overall percentage “Excellent”	Percentage “Excellent”			
	Below <i>Basic</i> 114 or below <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Basic</i> 115–175 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Proficient</i> 176–224 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Advanced</i> 225 or above <sup>1</sup>
1	#	#	3	24

# Percentage rounds to zero.

<sup>1</sup> NAEP writing composite scale range.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

**Sample “Excellent” Response**

“Excellent” responses provided very clear and well-developed descriptions of lunchtime. The response shown here presents an extensive description of lunch with well-chosen details and clear transitions across the response. Word choices are effective and sentence structure is varied. The “Excellent” rating was assigned to 1 percent of the responses to this task and these responses map at the scale score 273.

At lunchtime I usually eat cold lunch. My mother packs me a sandwich, a drink, fruit, and a treat. When I get in the lunchroom I find an empty table and sit there, and eat my lunch. My friends come and sit down with me. I open my lunch and start to eat. First I eat my sandwich then I open my drink, then eat my fruit and last but not least my treat. After that I sit quietly until I'm

dismissed. When I am I go into the bathroom and clean my teeth because I have braces.

When I am done with that I go outside and put my lunchbox away and go find my friends. We usually play four square or play on the play ground. If we are not on the play-ground or on the four square ground we are on the field playing tag, kickball, or soccer. I really like to play soccer and my friends do too.

## Grade 4 Sample Persuasive Task and Student Responses

### Grade 4

### Persuasive: *Library Book*

In the *Library Book* task, students were asked to write a letter convincing the school librarian to purchase a new copy of the student's favorite book, which is missing from the library. While some students chose to describe the contents of a specific book, others chose to make arguments based on how they and friends or family members enjoy reading. Responses to this task were rated according to the 6-level, grade 4 persuasive scoring guide.

Imagine this situation:

Your favorite book is missing from your school library. It might be a book that you like to read over and over again. Or it might be a book that your teacher or parent has read to you. Some of your friends also like to read this book. The school librarian is not sure she wants to buy the book again.

Write a letter to convince your school librarian to buy the book again. In your letter, give lots of reasons why the book should be in your school library.

**Table 4.7** Percentage scored “Uneven” or better for persuasive writing task, by achievement level range, grade 4: 2002

**Grade 4**

Overall percentage “Uneven” or better	Percentage “Uneven” or better			
	Below <i>Basic</i> 114 or below <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Basic</i> 115–175 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Proficient</i> 176–224 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Advanced</i> 225 or above <sup>1</sup>
88	43	91	100	100

<sup>1</sup> NAEP writing composite scale range.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

**Sample “Uneven” Response**

“Uneven” responses took clear positions, but lacked either development or control over sentence structure, or sometimes both. The response shown below takes a clear persuasive position in response to the task, but offers limited support and is somewhat repetitive. The “Uneven” or better rating was given to 88 percent of the responses to this task. These responses map at the scale score 114.

Dear Librarian,

I think you should buy the book again because everybody likes it. I like to read it over and over again. Both of my parents like it too. Everybody voted that you should buy that book back. I hope that's a good enough reason. please buy the book.

Sincerely,

[Student's name]

**Table 4.8** Percentage scored “Skillful” or better for persuasive writing task, by achievement level range, grade 4: 2002

**Grade 4**

Overall percentage “Skillful” or better	Percentage “Skillful” or better			
	Below <i>Basic</i> 114 or below <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Basic</i> 115–175 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Proficient</i> 176–224 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Advanced</i> 225 or above <sup>1</sup>
17	#	5	40	89

# Percentage rounds to zero.

<sup>1</sup> NAEP writing composite scale range.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

**Sample “Skillful” Response**

“Skillful” persuasive responses attempted to persuade the school librarian to reacquire a chosen book, developed those reasons in parts of the response, and provided some transitions (but not consistently) to connect reasons for the students’ positions. This response exhibits these features, and also makes a direct address to the intended audience: “Think of the happiness you will bring to the kids . . . .” The “Skillful” or better rating was given to 17 percent of the responses to this task; these responses map at scale score 215.

Dear librarian,

Please get the book back.  
When I read that book it makes  
me feel like I am in it, It  
also makes me happy when I  
am sad. It could help kids also  
feel happy when their sad. It  
could also help them imagine what  
they want. If you get the book  
I promise I will help you  
fix the books when you need  
help. My dad will feel so  
happy reading the book to me.  
Think of the happiness you  
will bring to the kids so  
please please get the book back  
I express how I felt about  
this book I hope you get  
it back soon.



♡ Sincerely, [Student's name]

**Table 4.9** Percentage scored “Excellent” for persuasive writing task, by achievement level range, grade 4: 2002

**Grade 4**

Overall percentage “Excellent”	Percentage “Excellent”			
	Below <i>Basic</i> 114 or below <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Basic</i> 115–175 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Proficient</i> 176–224 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Advanced</i> 225 or above <sup>1</sup>
2	#	#	4	34

# Percentage rounds to zero.

<sup>1</sup> NAEP writing composite scale range.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

**Sample “Excellent” Response**

“Excellent” responses consistently developed clear, focused positions with well-chosen reasons and examples. In this response, the variety of sentences and precise word choices (“I am quite sorry for this inconvenience”) increase the strength of the argument. The “Excellent” rating was given to 2 percent of the responses to this task; such responses map at the scale score 255.

Dear [Name of Librarian],

I am quite sorry for this inconvenience, but my favorite book, *Gypsy Summer* is missing from your collection. We have so many old books on the shelves, that they are falling apart. *Gypsy Summer* is an educational book, because it has the language of the Gypsies, and I think we could use a new book on our shelves. I feel that people may want to read *Gypsy Summer*. It is quite an interesting book. Again, I hope it is not inconvenient. You can buy it at Half Price Books, Barnes and Noble, and many other bookstores you may know of.

Sincerely ☺

[Student's Name] ☺

## Grade 8 Sample Narrative Task and Student Responses

### Grade 8

### Narrative: *President for a Day*

*President for a Day* engaged students' imaginations by asking them to develop a story about waking up to find themselves President of the United States. Some students chose to present the experience as a dream, while others told the story as a real-life challenge. Responses to this task were rated according to the 6-level, grade 8 narrative scoring guide.

Imagine that you wake up one morning to discover that you have become the President of the United States. Write a story about your first day as President.

**Table 4.10** Percentage scored “Uneven” or better for narrative writing task, by achievement level range, grade 8: 2002

**Grade 8**

Overall percentage “Uneven” or better	Percentage “Uneven” or better			
	Below <i>Basic</i> 113 or below <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Basic</i> 114–172 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Proficient</i> 173–223 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Advanced</i> 224 or above <sup>1</sup>
90	51	94	100	100

<sup>1</sup> NAEP writing composite scale range.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

**Sample “Uneven” Response**

“Uneven” responses often identified actions they would perform as president, but listed them rather than developing them into a full story, as does the response shown here. The “Uneven” or better rating was given to 90 percent of the responses to this task. Such responses map at the scale score 110.

I would do a lot of things on my first day as president. The first thing I would do is call my family. Then I will eat an enormous breakfast. Then I would ride through Washington DC waving hi to everyone. I would then tour the White House and look at all of my suits. I would then look at all of money and go to the stores. I would buy anything I wanted and buy presents for my family. Then I would go back and study all of my papers. Then I would eat a very large lunch and dinner. Then I would sleep. All in all, I would do a lot of things on my first day as president.

**Table 4.11** Percentage scored “Skillful” or better for narrative writing task, by achievement level range, grade 8: 2002

**Grade 8**

Overall percentage “Skillful” or better	Percentage “Skillful” or better			
	Below <i>Basic</i> 113 or below <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Basic</i> 114–172 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Proficient</i> 173–223 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Advanced</i> 224 or above <sup>1</sup>
20	#	8	47	91

# Percentage rounds to zero.

<sup>1</sup> NAEP writing composite scale range.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

**Sample “Skillful” Response**

“Skillful” responses provided more depth to the stories than “Uneven” responses by developing events and characters with detail. In the response shown below, the student developed some parts of the response, including the feeling of waking up as president in new surroundings. While there is some good sentence variety, there are also lapses in continuity caused by gaps in development of the remainder of the day and evening. The “Skillful” or better rating was given to 20 percent of the responses to this task and these responses map at the scale score 201.

It was my first official day being the president. I woke up early that day because I was extremely eager to begin my work.

I woke up in the most enormous bed I've ever laid eyes on. There were layers of royal blue silk sheets under a soft white down comforter. The deep red pillows supported my head and had helped me to enjoy a good night's rest.

I hesitated before climbing out of bed, not wanting to leave my sense of euphoria. I eventually found myself making my way to the walk-in closet across the room. In it were countless pants, shirts, shoes, and ties that were all unique, so it wasn't a difficult decision.

I heard a knock on the door and called for them to come in. It was my maid. Yes, I had a maid! I couldn't believe it.

I sprang downstairs to the breakfast table as numerous people were awaiting to serve me. It was delicious.

After brushing my teeth and doing all of the other essentials, it was time for me to take charge.

My office was humungous and was covered, floor to ceiling with rows and rows of books. In front of gigantic windows, was my desk, where I sat for many hours of the day stressing out over papers I needed to sign and decisions I had to make. It wasn't as simple as I thought.

That night I had a dinner party to attend to with some important businessmen. Everything ran smoothly.

I returned home that night to my cozy bed, just in time for yet another good night's sleep. Only to wake up and repeat it all tomorrow. What a life I live. ☺

**Table 4.12** Percentage scored “Excellent” for narrative writing task, by achievement level range, grade 8: 2002

**Grade 8**

Overall percentage “Excellent”	Percentage “Excellent”			
	Below <i>Basic</i> 113 or below <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Basic</i> 114–172 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Proficient</i> 173–223 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Advanced</i> 224 or above <sup>1</sup>
5	#	1	13	52

# Percentage rounds to zero.  
<sup>1</sup> NAEP writing composite scale range.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

**Sample “Excellent” Response**

“Excellent” responses provided detail and development across the response and exhibited sentence variety and specific word choices. The sample response shown below uses well-chosen descriptive detail to develop events that occur over the day, doing so with sentence variety and even some suspense, as when the security SWAT team bursts into the office. The “Excellent” rating was given to 5 percent of the responses to this task and these responses map at the scale score 232.

Today was my first day in office as president of the United States. Wow! What a huge job. Today was a very confusing day for me. This is how it started.

I woke up early, and got ready for the day. I took a shower, ate breakfast, and got dressed in my very best outfit. Then I went to the office.

The office was huge! It had big clean windows, with bright, warming rays of sunshine streaming through the spotless glass. Out the window, I saw a huge lawn of freshly cut grass, that was as green as I had ever seen. I could see the lawnmower as it cut in neat little rows and columns, and I opened a window to smell the wonderful aroma of that fresh cut grass.

All of the sudden, I heard the ear-piercing shriek of a fire alarm. I saw red flashing lights all around me, and I could hear the words, "Security Breach!" being shouted in the hallway. Then the SWAT Team burst in to the

room and shouted, "Don't move! Put your hands on your head! Turn around facing me, and spread your legs!"

As soon as I turned around, they all started apologizing. I told them not to worry about it, and they went on their way.

After that, the day went on without another incident. I could hear the phones at my secretary's desk ringing off the hook. Many important looking people came in to ask my advice on some of the nation's issues, and I answered all their questions to the best of my ability.

At lunchtime, I took an extra long lunch break to tour the White House. I never realized how big it was! I got lost three times, and I had to use my cell phone to call my secretary. She had to come find me and bring me back to the office.

The actual food at lunch was weird. I got all these different

gourmet foods, half of which, I didn't even eat. Tomorrow I'll have to ask for McDonald's.

When I got back to the office, my personal phone was ringing. It was one of my friends from back home, wondering how I was doing. I was in tears by the time I hung up, because I realized just how much I miss my friends.

The day started off good, and I felt like I had tons of luxurious space around me, but after the phone call I felt like I was trapped in a small cage.

I decided to go for a walk outside with my dog, Su Eje. The fresh air made me feel much better.

I don't know if I can do this job, but I'll try my best!

## Grade 8 Informative Task and Student Responses

### Grade 8

### Informative: *Save a Book*

For *Save a Book*, students were asked to explain what book they would save by memorization if they lived in a society where reading was not allowed. Since any book could be chosen, a wide range of responses was acceptable. Responses to this task were rated according to the 6-level, grade 8 informative scoring guide.

A novel written in the 1950's describes a world where people are not allowed to read books. A small group of people who want to save books memorize them, so that the books won't be forgotten. For example, an old man who has memorized the novel *The Call of the Wild* helps a young boy memorize it by reciting the story to him. In this way, the book is saved for the future.

If you were told that you could save just one book for future generations, which book would you choose?

Write an essay in which you discuss which book you would choose to save for future generations and what it is about the book that makes it important to save. Be sure to discuss in detail why the book is important to you and why it would be important to future generations.

**Table 4.13** Percentage scored “Uneven” or better for informative writing task, by achievement level range, grade 8: 2002

Overall percentage “Uneven” or better	Percentage “Uneven” or better			
	Below <i>Basic</i> 113 or below <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Basic</i> 114–172 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Proficient</i> 173–223 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Advanced</i> 224 or above <sup>1</sup>
84	36	88	100	100

<sup>1</sup> NAEP writing composite scale range.  
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

### Sample “Uneven” Response

“Uneven” responses to this task were disorganized, lacked development, or were marked by errors that sometimes interfered with understanding. The “Uneven” response shown below offers some information about the plot that makes the book exciting to the student, but suffers from a lack of development. The “Uneven” or better rating was given to 84 percent of the responses to this task; such responses map at scale score 117.

*I think Moby Dick would be a good book to save because it is very interesting, it keeps you excited. The book is about a captain that wants, not just any whale but Moby Dick. Moby Dick is a huge whale that took the captain's leg many years ago. The captain wants to kill the whale so badly that he would die trying.*

*It is also good because it's about a man that can go so insane that he would sacrifice his own people, his own mates, his own friends.*

**Table 4.14** Percentage scored “Skillful” or better for informative writing task, by achievement level range, grade 8: 2002

Grade 8				
Percentage “Skillful” or better				
Overall percentage “Skillful” or better	Below <i>Basic</i> 113 or below <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Basic</i> 114–172 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Proficient</i> 173–223 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Advanced</i> 224 or above <sup>1</sup>
14	#	4	34	81

# Percentage rounds to zero.

<sup>1</sup> NAEP writing composite scale range.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

### Sample “Skillful” Response

“Skillful” responses developed information with some details and clear organization, but had occasional lapses in continuity. The “Skillful” response shown below uses well-constructed sentences and good word choices to discuss the qualities of the book *Little Women*. However, the response has lapses in continuity because the author does not support enough of her claims about the book’s qualities with examples from the work itself. The “Skillful” or better rating was given to 14 percent of the responses to this task and responses at this level map at the scale score 215.

If I could save only one novel for future generations, it would be a timeless classic. The novel would have to be interesting, but not eccentric. It would have to be beautiful, but not too mushy. It would have to show emotions, such as joy, sorrow, pain, and love. Most definitely, it would have to be honest, and true-to-life. If I could save only one novel for future generations, it would be Louisa May Alcott's Little Women.

Little Women has everything a person could want in a novel. It has someone that everyone can relate to (if you're not like Jo, then you can relate to either Beth, Meg, Amy, or Marmee); it has love, and heart-break; pain and sorrow; death and reminiscence. It even has the one thing that everyone enjoys: honesty/truth.

So, in conclusion, I would save Little Women, if I could save only one novel. I won't reiterate the reasons because I think you can see why I chose Louisa May Alcott's most famous work.

**Table 4.15** Percentage scored “Excellent” for informative writing task, by achievement level range, grade 8: 2002

Grade 8				
Overall percentage “Excellent”	Percentage “Excellent”			
	Below <i>Basic</i> 113 or below <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Basic</i> 114–172 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Proficient</i> 173–223 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Advanced</i> 224 or above <sup>1</sup>
4	#	#	8	46

# Percentage rounds to zero.  
<sup>1</sup> NAEP writing composite scale range.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

**Sample “Excellent” Response**

“Excellent” responses provided well-chosen details and exhibited sentence variety and precise word choices across the response. In the sample response below, consistently well-chosen detail is provided to support his or her views about *The Giver*. The response is very well organized, with strong transitions. The student’s choice of words and comfort with varied sentence structure add power to his or her insights about the importance of books and reading. The “Excellent” rating was given to 4 percent of the responses to this task. Such responses map at the scale score 241.

If I could only save one book, I would save The Giver by Lois Lowry. The Giver is one of my favorite books. I think it would benefit future generations, because it shows human faults, gives hope, and it models the "real-life" situation.

The Giver is about a very secluded community of people. The government chooses spouses, children, jobs, and determines every course of everyone's lives, except for the Receiver of Memory. He or she alone has all the knowledge of the past. The Receiver can see in color, feels true pain, recognizes animals, he or she holds the world's history in his or her mind. The people of old had chosen to give up color, weather, choosing. Everything was a state of "sameness." Everyone believes everything the government says, everyone follows the rules. This shows how gullible and dependent the human race truly is. To lead an entire community by the nose for countless generations is

amazing, and the people themselves had chosen their fate.

Even though this book tells of a very deprived community it does give hope. Jonas, the protagonist, and Gabriel, his adoptive brother, run away from this community. After many days of running from the searching of the community. Jonas hears something. He hears music. Singing and music were not allowed in the community. When Jonas hears the singing he remembers a memory he had received. It was a memory of love. The book closes with Jonas riding towards the new community he sees radiating love.

This book is also very similar to the situation presented. Although there are books, they are not read. Reading for pleasure is simply not done. Books open passages for people. They shed light

on different countries, culture, ideas, and much more. Jonas's community is so sheltered. None of the ordinary citizens can remember a time of choosing of differentness. Everything is the same for everyone. If these people had had books, then they would have known what they were missing. They could have felt true emotions and really lived the life they were Given.

The Giver is an outstanding book. It has morals, a story, and is very realistic. If I could I would save The Giver.

## Grade 8 Persuasive Task and Student Responses

Grade 8

### Persuasive: *School Schedule*

*School Schedule* required students to read a short newspaper article about the sleeping habits of adults and children, and how those habits ought to influence school schedules. Students were able to react to the article and use its content to frame their arguments. Students offered a range of positions, some arguing both for and against changing the school schedule, and discussed potential effects of a schedule change on in-school performance, participation in after-school activities, and family life. Responses to this task were rated according to the 6-level, grade 8 persuasive scoring guide.

Imagine that the article shown below appeared in your local newspaper. Read the article carefully, then write a letter to your principal arguing for or against the proposition that classes at your school should begin and end much later in the day. Be sure to give detailed reasons to support your argument and make it convincing.

# Studies Show Students Need To Sleep Late

## *Night Owls Versus Early Birds*

The *Journal of Medicine* announced today the results of several recent studies on the sleep patterns of teenagers and adults. These studies show that adults and teenagers often have different kinds of sleep patterns because they are at different stages in the human growth cycle.

The study on teenagers' sleep patterns showed that changes in teenagers' growth hormones are related to sleeping patterns. In general, teenagers' energy levels are at their lowest in the morning, between 9 a.m. and 12 noon. To make the most of students' attention span and ability to learn, the study showed that most teenagers need to stay up late at night and to sleep late in the morning. They

called this pattern "the night owl syndrome."

Studies of adults (over 30 years of age) showed the opposite sleep pattern. On average, adults' energy levels were at their lowest at night between 9 p.m. and 12 midnight and at their highest between 6 and 9 a.m. In addition, a study of adults of different ages revealed that as adults get older they seem to wake up earlier in the morning. Thus, adults need to go to sleep earlier in the evening. Researchers called this sleep pattern "the early bird syndrome."

Researchers claim that these studies should be reviewed by all school systems and appropriate changes should be made to the daily school schedule.

**Table 4.16** Percentage scored “Uneven” or better for persuasive writing task, by achievement level range, grade 8: 2002

Grade 8	Percentage “Uneven” or better				
	Overall percentage “Uneven” or better	Below <i>Basic</i> 113 or below <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Basic</i> 114–172 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Proficient</i> 173–223 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Advanced</i> 224 or above <sup>1</sup>
	85	34	90	100	100

<sup>1</sup> NAEP writing composite scale range.  
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

### Sample “Uneven” Response

“Uneven” responses took a clear position about changing the school schedule, but offered unclear or undeveloped support. Further, they often had difficulties with sentence boundary control. The “Uneven” response shown below does make a few clear points in support of a position, but none of those points are sufficiently developed. The “Uneven” or better rating was given to 85 percent of the responses to this task. These responses map at the scale score 119.

I am against changing the school schedule. It would take away time that students have to spend with their family and friends. Students would be sleeping in the morning, doing homework after school. This leaves no time for themselves. This would also interfere with other activities like after school sports programs. It would also disrupt parents schedule and keep them up later than needed.

**Table 4.17** Percentage scored “Skillful” or better for persuasive writing task, by achievement level range, grade 8: 2002

Grade 8				
Percentage “Skillful” or better				
Overall percentage “Skillful” or better	Below <i>Basic</i> 113 or below <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Basic</i> 114–172 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Proficient</i> 173–223 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Advanced</i> 224 or above <sup>1</sup>
18	#	5	43	93

# Percentage rounds to zero.  
<sup>1</sup> NAEP writing composite scale range.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

### Sample “Skillful” Response

“Skillful” responses offered clear positions supported with reasons and examples in parts of the response. The following sample response does develop the arguments and is reasonably organized; however, transitions between ideas and arguments are not always present, and sentence structure and word choice are relatively unvaried. As with many upper-level responses, rhetorical questions are addressed to the audience (e.g., “What happens when we get older?”). The “Skillful” or better rating was given to 18 percent of the responses to this task and such responses map at the scale score 205.

Dear Principal,

I think you should keep the daily schedule as it is. As much as I would like to stay up late and sleep in, I don't think you should change the schedule. First of all, if you did change the schedule, the students would get home late and have to do their chores and go to bed. Thus, leaving no time for homework or recreation. Most of the kids I know play sports and if they get home late then there would be no time for practices, games, etc. Also, everyone in a family isn't a teenager, so they would be on a completely different schedule. So you would never be able to spend quality time with the people in your family. What happens when we get older? We can't keep these bad habits forever. If we do it long enough we might not be able to get out of it. Someday we will have to get up early and go to work. Students have already adapted to the early schedule of having to get up and go to school. Why change it?

**Table 4.18** Percentage scored “Excellent” for persuasive writing task, by achievement level range, grade 8: 2002

**Grade 8**

Overall percentage “Excellent”	Percentage “Excellent”			
	Below <i>Basic</i> 113 or below <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Basic</i> 114–172 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Proficient</i> 173–223 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Advanced</i> 224 or above <sup>1</sup>
3	#	#	6	46

# Percentage rounds to zero.  
<sup>1</sup> NAEP writing composite scale range.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

**Sample “Excellent” Response**

“Excellent” responses, apart from being consistently well developed and organized, sometimes used a variety of persuasive techniques to convince the reader. For example, the “Excellent” response shown below addresses potential counterarguments. The response is notable for its focused, well-organized development of an argument about tired teachers. The “Excellent” rating was given to 3 percent of the responses to this task. These responses map at the scale score 241.

Dear Principal,

I am an eighth grade student in your school, and I believe that the schedule should not be changed. While it may be true that students are not at their fullest potential in the morning, it is also true that teachers are not at their fullest potential in the afternoon. If you did change the schedule, the students may be more ready to learn, but the teachers will be less ready to teach. What good is it to have potentially good students if they cannot be taught well? At least if the teachers are teaching their best to students some information has to settle into their minds. If the teachers can teach well enough, the students will learn what they need to, regardless of whether they feel like learning or not. It

doesn't take much of an effort for students to hear the information, but it takes a lot for a teacher to process the information, figure out how to give it to the students in an understandable form and then actually teach it to them.

Also, if students are awake and fully energized, there is more of a chance they may cause a disturbance in the classroom. Furthermore, if teachers are tired, they won't be as strict as they should be, and the disturbances will worsen.

The way the schedule is set up now, both students and teachers have a fair share of suitable times. The teachers have the morning and the students

have the afternoon.

I know you will probably be receiving lots of student letters arguing for schedule changes, so please keep my letter in mind as you read them. Thank you.

Your student,

[Student's Name]

## Grade 12 Sample Narrative Task and Student Responses

### Grade 12

#### Narrative: *Tall Tale*

*Tall Tale* offered an example of a familiar form of American folk literature to engage twelfth-grade student writers, and asked students to create their own tall tales. The task evoked a wide range of responses, from imaginative feats of strength to saving entire towns from natural disaster. Responses to this task were rated according to the 6-level grade 12 narrative scoring guide.

A tall tale is a type of story that uses exaggeration to solve a real-life problem. As the story progresses, the main character demonstrates superhuman abilities to overcome ordinary obstacles. The story shown below is an example of a tall tale.

#### A Flood and Drought Tale

It had been raining without a break for four days. The roads were flooded, power outages were common, and dry basements had become a thing of the past. At the same time, a drought on the other side of the country was responsible for dangerously low reservoir levels, thirsty cattle, and parched fields.

Victor, a young man who lived in one of the flooded towns, was very unhappy about the continuing bad weather. Not only had he spent the last two days bailing water from his family's basement, but he was due to miss out on a camping trip, originally planned for the upcoming weekend, that he and his friends had been excitedly anticipating.

Victor put a small rope in his back pocket and walked outside. As he stood with the rain pelting down on him, he grew until he stood a mile high. Standing up above the rain clouds, he took the rope from his back pocket. The rope was now hundreds of yards long and Victor used it to lasso the rain clouds. Holding the clouds in the rope, he walked across the country taking fifty-mile steps. He untied the clouds over the drought-stricken land and a heavy rain began to fall there. Then he walked back to his house in his town where the sun was now shining, shrank back down to his regular size, and went inside to pack for the camping trip.

Imagine that you will participate in a "tall-tale writing contest" at your school. Write your own tall tale. You can write about yourself, someone you know, or someone you imagine. Be sure to give your main character whatever superhuman abilities are necessary to save the day.

**Table 4.19** Percentage scored “Uneven” or better for narrative writing task, by achievement level range, grade 12: 2002

Overall percentage “Uneven” or better	Percentage “Uneven” or better			
	Below <i>Basic</i> 121 or below <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Basic</i> 122–177 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Proficient</i> 178–229 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Advanced</i> 230 or above <sup>1</sup>
94	79	99	100	***

\*\*\* Sample size is insufficient to permit a reliable estimate.  
<sup>1</sup> NAEP writing composite scale range.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

### Sample “Uneven” Response

“Uneven” responses told stories that were clear in parts, while other parts were unfocused or minimally developed. Clarity in some responses was affected by disjointed organization, uneven control over sentence boundaries or structure, or errors in grammar. The sample included here does attempt to tell a story, but has large gaps in development that make the response unclear. The “Uneven” or better rating was given to 94 percent of the responses to this task. Such responses map at the scale score 86.

*It was a great night with stars and the moon. The night was calm, no noise, and peaceful. Sally and one other friend were out observing the sky. Both of them were amazed of how beautiful the night was. When all of a sudden something strange started to occur. Sally looked closely and seen that two of the stars were fighting. The stars were glowing really fast and bumping into each other. Sally and her friend were scared. After a few minutes the moon appeared to get closer. After the moon got closer the problem seemed to stop.*

**Table 4.20** Percentage scored “Skillful” or better for narrative writing task, by achievement level range, grade 12: 2002

**Grade 12**

Overall percentage “Skillful” or better	Percentage “Skillful” or better			
	Below <i>Basic</i> 121 or below <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Basic</i> 122–177 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Proficient</i> 178–229 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Advanced</i> 230 or above <sup>1</sup>
29	3	24	66	***

\*\*\* Sample size is insufficient to permit a reliable estimate.

<sup>1</sup> NAEP writing composite scale range.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

**Sample “Skillful” Response**

“Skillful” responses told well-developed and well-organized stories with occasional lapses in continuity and some sentence variety and good word choices. The story shown below exhibits a mix of well-executed sentences and more awkward sentences with simple word choices. The response’s well-chosen details about Jacob and the snow crisis balance these weaknesses. The “Skillful” or better rating was given to 29 percent of the responses to this task and such responses map at the scale score 192.

## Jacob the Strongman

In the town of Exercise, the citizens would always experience problems with the snow. Usually for months, it would snow and snow on the town, causing massive snowstorms and on top of that, when the snow began to thaw, flooding would start pulling businesses and homes. The mayor of the town knew about the problem and called for a town meeting. The citizens of the town talked and debated and decided that they would need the help of Jacob the strongman to solve the problem.

Jacob was a very strongman. He could lift anything from big tanks to gigantic houses. Whatever required great strength, Jacob was the man for the job. However this time it was a difficult problem. The town wanted Jacob to lift up the town and bring it to a higher elevation to prevent flooding and to minimize the amount of snow being collected.

He thought to himself "Could I really do it?" He debated with this question for many days and decided he will do what is best for the town.

So on one uncommon sunny day, the town waited anxiously for Jacob. As he came out of his house, Jacob had a determined look on his face and he talked to no one. Then he went to the edge of town and began pulling the ground. He was pushing and pulling and it seemed as if Jacob couldn't do it, but he kept on trying. He was turning so red from all the exertion and effort he was using until finally the whole town was lifted off the ground. Everyone was ecstatic and cheered for Jacob. Jacob brought the town to a higher mountain and they had a huge celebration. All of that work took a matter of hours and everyone was impressed by Jacob's heroism. Since then there was never a strong man like Jacob who lived in our area. Although, Jacob is already gone, the town's people know that all of their happiness and the salvation of their town was due to the strongman, Jacob.

**Table 4.21** Percentage scored “Excellent” for narrative writing task, by achievement level range, grade 12: 2002

Grade 12				
Overall percentage “Excellent”	Percentage “Excellent”			
	Below <i>Basic</i> 121 or below <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Basic</i> 122–177 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Proficient</i> 178–229 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Advanced</i> 230 or above <sup>1</sup>
6	#	2	20	***

# Percentage rounds to zero.  
 \*\*\* Sample size is insufficient to permit a reliable estimate.  
<sup>1</sup> NAEP writing composite scale range.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

**Sample “Excellent” Response**

“Excellent” responses consistently used well-chosen details and integrated narrative elements into their stories. This sample response tells a compact, smooth story with very effective details, consistent variety in sentence structure, and good word choices that develop Maury’s character (e.g., “Ping!’ Maury cried out with glee . . .”). The “Excellent” rating was given to 6 percent of the responses to this task. Such responses map at the scale score 243.

Ms. Smith was not your typical teacher. She was mean and cold-hearted to her students, giving them one day to complete 10-page assignments. She did not care if her students did well in her class or not, for she was too occupied with finding more work to give to her students.

All of Ms. Smith's students were hopelessly discouraged when, on Tuesday, she assigned them a 15-page essay to complete and turn in the next day. All but Maury. Fortunately for Maury, he was an extremely clever kid who thought he could do anything. He had an idea to how he could pull off his essay in the little time he was given.

That evening, Maury slaved away at his essay with renewed energy in hopes of his brilliant plan working. When the sun set, Maury was not even half finished his paper. He worked all through the night, writing, thinking, researching, more writing, and when the kitchen clock read "quarter past six", he knew his plan needed to start.

So, with fingers crossed, Maury took his beloved slingshot outside to the driveway,

Where he then gathered a few rocks. Aiming carefully at the rising sun, he took a shot. 'Ping!' Maury cried out with glee as he watched the sun, which he just hit with great precision, fall back below the horizon. Hurrying back inside to finish his essay, Maury was satisfied with his success to gain a few more precious hours to work, giving the title "all-nighter" a new meaning.

## Grade 12 Sample Informative Task and Student Responses

### Grade 12

#### Informative: *Save a Book*

*Save a Book* was previously discussed for grade 8 informative writing. Like eighth-graders, twelfth-grade writers responded well to this task, writing about books ranging from classics such as Homer's *Iliad* to popular favorites and even the occasional history textbook. Upper-level responses sometimes used the task as a springboard to make observations about social issues. Responses to this task were rated according to the 6-level, grade 12 informative scoring guide.

A novel written in the 1950's describes a world where people are not allowed to read books. A small group of people who want to save books memorize them, so that the books won't be forgotten. For example, an old man who has memorized the novel *The Call of the Wild* helps a young boy memorize it by reciting the story to him. In this way, the book is saved for the future.

If you were told that you could save just one book for future generations, which book would you choose?

Write an essay in which you discuss which book you would choose to save for future generations and what it is about the book that makes it important to save. Be sure to discuss in detail why the book is important to you and why it would be important to future generations.

**Table 4.22** Percentage scored “Uneven” or better for informative writing task, by achievement level range, grade 12: 2002

Grade 12	Percentage “Uneven” or better				
	Overall percentage “Uneven” or better	Below <i>Basic</i> 121 or below <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Basic</i> 122–177 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Proficient</i> 178–229 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Advanced</i> 230 or above <sup>1</sup>
	82	48	91	99	***

\*\*\* Sample size is insufficient to permit a reliable estimate.  
<sup>1</sup> NAEP writing composite scale range.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

**Sample “Uneven” Response**

“Uneven” responses often presented quite limited information about books chosen for discussion. The response below presents a very brief description and a series of unsupported abstractions about *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Some statements seem unrelated, making the response disjointed. The “Uneven” or better rating was given to 82 percent of the responses to this task. These responses map at the scale score 116.

The book that I would save for future generations is "To Kill a Mockingbird". I think that is one of my all time favorite books that I have read. It focuses on the prejudice that was & still exists to some degree, in this country. I think children in the future should know about the past & the trials & tribulations people have gone through to get our society to how it is now. This is the perfect example of a struggle & what it took to deal with it. Although the story may not end the way you want it to, the book still portrays a step taken to make us that much better of a country. Little things sometime make a world of difference.

**Table 4.23** Percentage scored “Skillful” or better for informative writing task, by achievement level range, grade 12: 2002

Grade 12				
Percentage “Skillful” or better				
Overall percentage “Skillful” or better	Below <i>Basic</i> 121 or below <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Basic</i> 122–177 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Proficient</i> 178–229 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Advanced</i> 230 or above <sup>1</sup>
17	#	11	46	***

# Percentage rounds to zero.  
 \*\*\* Sample size is insufficient to permit a reliable estimate.  
<sup>1</sup> NAEP writing composite scale range.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

### Sample “Skillful” Response

“Skillful” responses often included extensive information and organized the information quite well, with occasional lapse in continuity. The sample response shown below develops a focused discussion about *The Joy Luck Club* using many pertinent details about the book. The few errors do not interfere with understanding; however, occasionally awkward sentence structure and a bit of repetition about the importance of experience weaken the response. The “Skillful” or better rating was given to 17 percent of the responses to this task and such responses map at the scale score 211.

If I had to choose just one book to memorize and pass on to all the generations to follow, I would pick The Joy Luck Club by Amy Tan.

Although it is the story of the relationships between a group of Chinese immigrants and their daughters, I believe it is a book that anyone any could relate to and should hear about. This is especially true in the U.S., where we are all immigrants or relatives of immigrants.

The relationships that evolve throughout the novel tell a very powerful story about differences. There are the adults, who came to California from a scary, sometimes cruel, world in China, where freedom was unheard of; then there are the first generation of children, who don't understand their parents' plight and are torn between who their parents want them to be and who they are becoming.

This novel leaves a lot to be learned and understood about relationships, especially mother-daughter relationships and generational relationships. These

relationships affected everyone, as is true for real-life relationships. Part of the reason for the realism of this story is probably that Ms. Tan spoke from a lot of her own experience, and the experiences of others is very important for all the generations to come to learn about and hear about, so that, even if they can't root it in their own experience, they can still possibly learn something about themselves that they didn't know was there and most certainly can learn something about this country and what makes it such a unique and special place to live.

The Joy Luck Club is about learning how to live in a new place, in a new culture and the difficulties of trying to relate to kids who know nothing, or very little, of that old place + culture that means so much. It's a great story that anyone should be able to appreciate and enjoy. The difficulties all the characters had to face were remarkable, and quite interesting to watch bloom.

**Table 4.24** Percentage scored “Excellent” for informative writing task, by achievement level range, grade 12: 2002

**Grade 12**

Overall percentage “Excellent”	Percentage “Excellent”			
	Below <i>Basic</i> 121 or below <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Basic</i> 122–177 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Proficient</i> 178–229 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Advanced</i> 230 or above <sup>1</sup>
4	#	1	12	***

# Percentage rounds to zero.

\*\*\* Sample size is insufficient to permit a reliable estimate.

<sup>1</sup> NAEP writing composite scale range.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

**Sample “Excellent” Response**

“Excellent” responses were well developed throughout with sentence variety and good word choice. The “Excellent” response shown below, about Herman Hesse’s *Demian*, is well developed and has strong transitions. Well-chosen details and precise word choices support a sustained controlling idea: that teens can learn from the main character’s coming of age. The “Excellent” rating was given to 4 percent of the responses to this task. “Excellent” responses map at the scale score 255.

Creating a literary masterpiece is most likely every writer's dream. German writer Hermann Hesse did so when he wrote Demian, the story of one boy's coming of age.

Although this novel is not necessarily a blatant American classic, it does have many powerful traits and deserves to be read by any high schooler. In the sense of literary analysis, the novel is an excellent example of Jungian psychology, and serves to chronicle a boy named Emil Sinclair's individuation, or the process of finding out who he is. High school is a wonderful time of self-discovery, where teens bond with several groups of friends, try different foods, fashions, classes, and experiences, both good and bad. The end result in May of senior year is a mature and confident adult, ready to enter the next stage of life. Since Sinclair is going through much of what an average student might (troubles at school, falling in love) relating with

and learning from Sinclair is an important aspect of the novel. The novel speaks of two realms: the dark half and the good half, and Sinclair's early "loss of innocence" by stealing a few coins from his mother. Many students feel disheartened by the sudden realization that they are no longer children, and long for the ignorant bliss of innocent childhood. Reading about Sinclair's journey through the good and bad realms prepares students for the imminent good and bad experiences in life, and provides them with a hope for the future: that such experiences will leave them a mature and well-rounded adult, full of wisdom and compassion.

If one were to rid the world of books, Demian should be saved because of its profound impact on its readers. It is said that a book is a classic if people continue to read it decades after it is written. I see a classic as nothing more than a literary jewel, polished until society can gaze into it and see a perfect glimpse of itself.

## Grade 12 Sample Persuasive Task and Student Responses

### Grade 12

#### Persuasive: *Heroes*

For this task, students are required to make an argument about who they think are the true heroes of our society. The task frames the topic in terms of media focus on celebrities versus the average person. Many students chose to discuss everyday people who perform heroic acts, whether family or community members or firefighters and police officers. Responses to this task were rated according to the 6-level, grade 12 persuasive scoring guide.

Who are our heroes? The media attention given to celebrities suggests that these people are today's heroes. Yet ordinary people perform extraordinary acts of courage every day that go virtually unnoticed. Are these people the real heroes?

Write an essay in which you define heroism and argue who you think our heroes really are—mass-media stars, ordinary people, or maybe both. Be sure to use examples of specific celebrities, other people you have heard or read about, or people from your own community to support your position.

**Table 4.25** Percentage scored “Uneven” or better for persuasive writing task, by achievement level range, grade 12: 2002

### Grade 12

Overall percentage “Uneven” or better	Percentage “Uneven” or better			
	Below <i>Basic</i> 121 or below <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Basic</i> 122–177 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Proficient</i> 178–229 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Advanced</i> 230 or above <sup>1</sup>
88	60	96	100	***

\*\*\* Sample size is insufficient to permit a reliable estimate.

<sup>1</sup> NAEP writing composite scale range.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

### Sample “Uneven” Response

“Uneven” responses took a clear position and offered support; but, that support was often lacking in development. This response also has some typical “Uneven” grammatical errors, inaccurate word choices, and some minor difficulties with sentence structure that occasionally interfere with understanding. The “Uneven” or better rating was given to 88 percent of the responses to this task and these responses map at the scale score 108.

I feel that celebrities are hero as well so are regular people like you and me. The reason for the statement before is because we as a whole look up to both.

The reason we look up to celebrities is because they are the ones that do things that we (normal people) <sup>only</sup> dream of doing. Lets just face it there are only some things you can do if you are a celebrity or rich. Some examples are playing professional sport or being a runway model, or be an actor.

On the other hand we look <sup>up</sup> at people we see everyday. I think this is because we can relate to them more. We look up to the fire fighters, police officers and rescue workers of 9/11 and they are our moms, dads, brothers, sisters, aunts & uncles.

It does not matter who it is we look up to it is what they did for us to look up to them. Do not look up at some one just because they are famous do it for what they did.

**Table 4.26** Percentage scored “Skillful” or better for persuasive writing task, by achievement level range, grade 12: 2002

Grade 12				
Percentage “Skillful” or better				
Overall percentage “Skillful” or better	Below <i>Basic</i> 121 or below <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Basic</i> 122–177 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Proficient</i> 178–229 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Advanced</i> 230 or above <sup>1</sup>
31	1	24	75	***

\*\*\* Sample size is insufficient to permit a reliable estimate.  
<sup>1</sup> NAEP writing composite scale range.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

### Sample “Skillful” Response

“Skillful” responses took clear positions and supported them with reasons or examples in parts of the response. The response shown below supports a clear position with pertinent examples (such as the friend’s grandmother) in much of the response. The paper is well organized overall, but does not consistently exhibit well-executed sentence variety or good word choices. The “Skillful” or better rating was given to 31 percent of the responses to this task. “Skillful” responses map at the scale score 187.

A hero is not a hero because of fame. Real heroes do not do heroic things for recognition, but because they are loving, compassionate, and courageous people. Heroes do not even have to do specific actions, they just have to be a model and admirable person.

I know of one woman who embodies heroism. She is my friend's grandmother. My friend lost her father and has a disabled mother. Her grandmother has raised my friend and her brother. She has done so with enthusiasm while doing so many other acts of love. She actively does excessive amounts of charity work, while never failing to miss one of my friend's softball games. At the elderly age of 70, she has raised two teenagers who are on my list of the most well-rounded people I know. She has done so with an immeasurable heart and practically on her own. <sup>Not to mention, she</sup> <sup>devotingly</sup> takes care <sup>of her disabled</sup> daughter.

The slam dunk of Michael Jordan does not compare with the courage and strength of my friend's grandmother. Just because celebrities are able to

be recognized nationally, does not make ordinary people any less heroic. Regular people deal with real life more common situations. Their strength to fight real life problems make them models for society. Celebrities cannot be my heroes because I cannot relate to their living situations. Ordinary people who tackle the same obstacles I face and reach out to others with love are my heroes. Regular people who top the charts with compassion do so with modesty. Celebrities are publically praised for their acts of kindness. Heroes are the people who do good things because they want to not because they need to be recognized.

Our world's greatest heroes are the ordinary people who love unconditionally. Wealth does not make a person have admirable traits. Heroes need not be well-known, just well-rounded,

**Table 4.27** Percentage scored “Excellent” for persuasive writing task, by achievement level range, grade 12: 2002

**Grade 12**

Overall percentage “Excellent”	Percentage “Excellent”			
	Below <i>Basic</i> 121 or below <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Basic</i> 122–177 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Proficient</i> 178–229 <sup>1</sup>	At <i>Advanced</i> 230 or above <sup>1</sup>
9	#	3	27	***

# Percentage rounds to zero.

\*\*\* Sample size is insufficient to permit a reliable estimate.

<sup>1</sup> NAEP writing composite scale range.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

**Sample “Excellent” Response**

“Excellent” responses offered consistent support for their positions in the form of well-chosen reasons and examples. In the sample response below, the writer uses the strategy of question/answer to advance and maintain the focus of his or her argument (e.g., “So, what about the sports stars we call heroes?”). The response is also outstanding in its consistent variety in sentence structure and precise word choices. The “Excellent” rating was given to 9 percent of the responses to this task. “Excellent” responses map at the scale score 231.

without the thought  
a reward in mind

In most cultures, actions speak louder than words. What you do effects how people view you and what roads you will take in life (talk is cheap). In the world today those who 'walk the walk', are often looked upon as being a hero of some sort. But what is a hero? In my definition, a hero is someone who, regardless of words, when it all comes down to it, acts in a way to help others. # One of the best living definitions of this word, were found in the streets of New York City, September 11th.)

After the World Trade Center buildings collapsed, fire and rescue crews swarmed the scene to help injured and trapped victims. They worked night and day for 2 weeks searching, rescuing, and saving those who were involved in this incident. But for what? Was it the drive to get paid that caused them to go help these people? Or perhaps it was the fame they would get in later months and years

at various sporting events and dinners. Both are wrong. They did it because they had to; it was what the human spirit inside of them told them to do. Now, sports announcers find other names to use for "heros" of the field because the name hero has already been filled with the firefighters and police officers who helped and gave their lives to helping others.

So, what about the sports stars we call heros? They make a million dollars a year to play a game and we call them heros. Why? Because what they do? What do they do that is so heroic? Amazing, possibly. Talented, most definately, but heroic? I think not. Americans throw-around the word hero too much that it doesn't have meaning after a while. Credit is often not given to those whom it is due.

As short handed as they are, Americas teachers should be the ultimate heros. They bust their butts all day everyday to educate the youth of America. And it's not for the pay. I can guarantee that.

Teachers enjoy educating and inspiring young adults to be better people. Smarter people. They fit the definition as well. They act in such a way as to help others without a reward in mind.

A hero helps others regardless of the reward or punishment. Many Americans don't realize the influence "real" heroes have on this + other nations needs to rethink its definition of "hero".

## Maps of Selected Tasks on the NAEP Writing Scale—Grades 4, 8, and 12

One way to interpret the meaning of the 0–300 writing scale is to show how students at different points on the writing scale are likely to perform on selected writing tasks. For the previously discussed tasks, the item maps on the following pages show the point on the writing scale at which students are likely to attain a particular rating on the 6-level scoring guide (scores for the “Unsatisfactory” level are not mapped). The cut scores for *Advanced*, *Proficient*, and *Basic* shown on the left side of each map indicate where students who receive a particular rating are likely to fall in relation to the three achievement levels.

An example of how the item maps present information may be helpful. Figure 4.1 shows the item map for three fourth-grade tasks. For the narrative task *Unusual Day*, those with writing scores at or above 202 on the scale were likely to write responses that were rated “Skillful” or better. For the informative task *Lunchtime*, those with writing scores at or above 216 were likely to write responses that were rated “Skillful” or better.

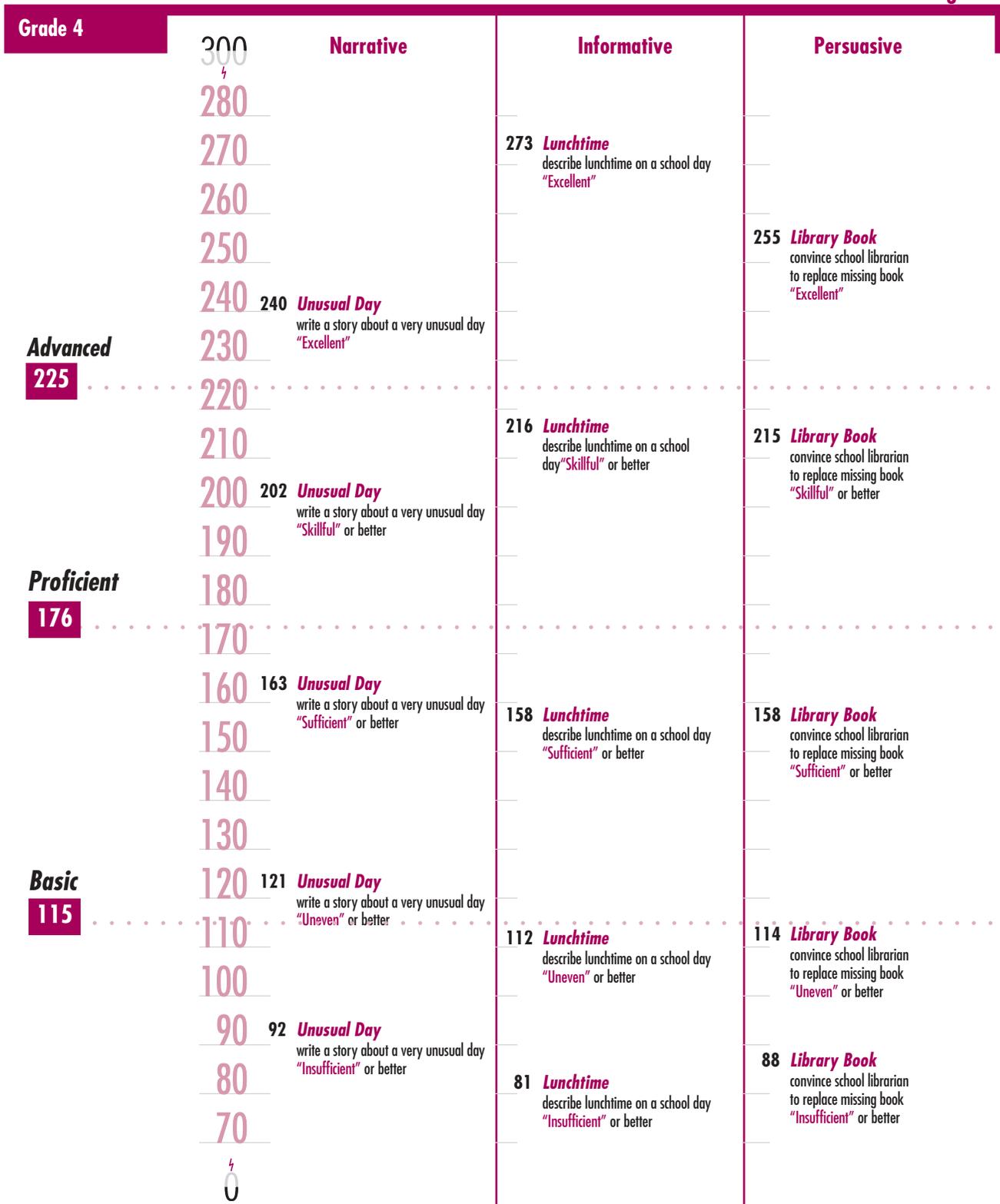
For each writing task indicated on the map, students who scored above a given scale point had a higher probability of receiving that rating or higher, while students who scored below that scale point had a lower probability of doing so. The map indicates the point at which at least 65 percent of students were likely to have the indicated rating for a given task. Although students above a given scale point for a given task had a higher probability of receiving a higher rating for that task, it does not mean that every student at or above that point always received a higher rating, nor does it mean that students below that point always received a lower rating. The item maps are useful indicators of higher or lower probabilities of responding to a task at a higher or lower level depending on students’ overall ability as measured by the NAEP scale.

For each purpose for writing (narrative, informative, or persuasive), the item maps on the following pages provide the selection of tasks discussed earlier in this chapter, along with a brief description of each task, mapped at the point at which students are considered to have the skill to write a response of the indicated quality. Figures 4.1 through 4.3 present item maps for grades 4, 8, and 12 respectively.

**Figure 4.1 Map of selected writing tasks on the NAEP writing scale, by purpose for writing, grade 4: 2002**

This map describes the knowledge or skill associated with answering individual writing tasks. The map identifies the point at which students had a higher probability of writing a response of the indicated quality.<sup>1</sup>

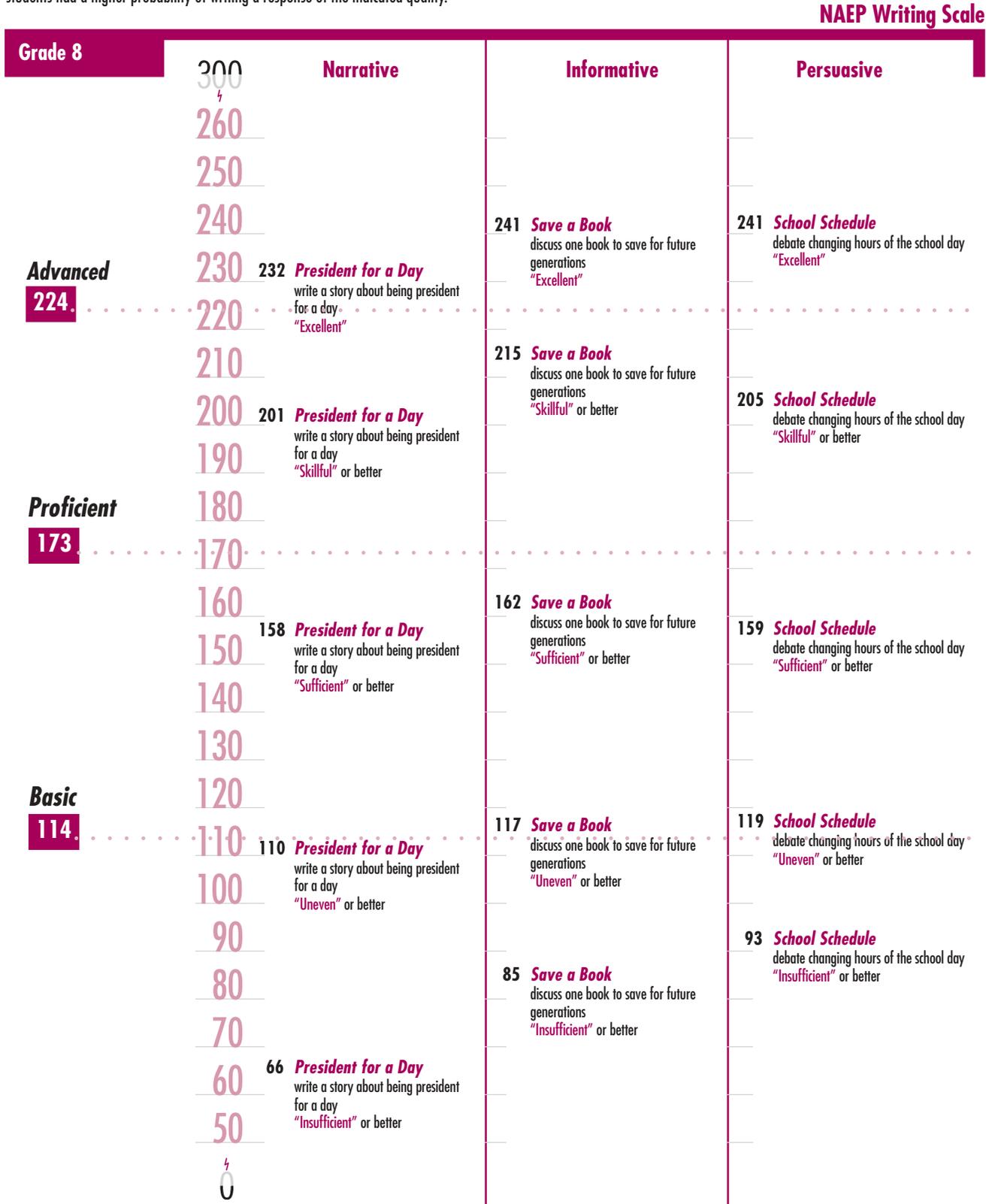
**NAEP Writing Scale**



<sup>1</sup> Each grade 4 writing task in the 2002 writing assessment was mapped onto the NAEP 0–300 writing scale. The map shows, for each level on the scoring guide from 2 ("Insufficient") through 6 ("Excellent"), the scale score attained by students who had a 65 percent probability of attaining that level or higher on the scoring guide. Only selected tasks are presented. Scale score ranges for writing achievement levels are referenced on the map. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

**Figure 4.2 Map of selected writing tasks on the NAEP writing scale, by purpose for writing, grade 8: 2002**

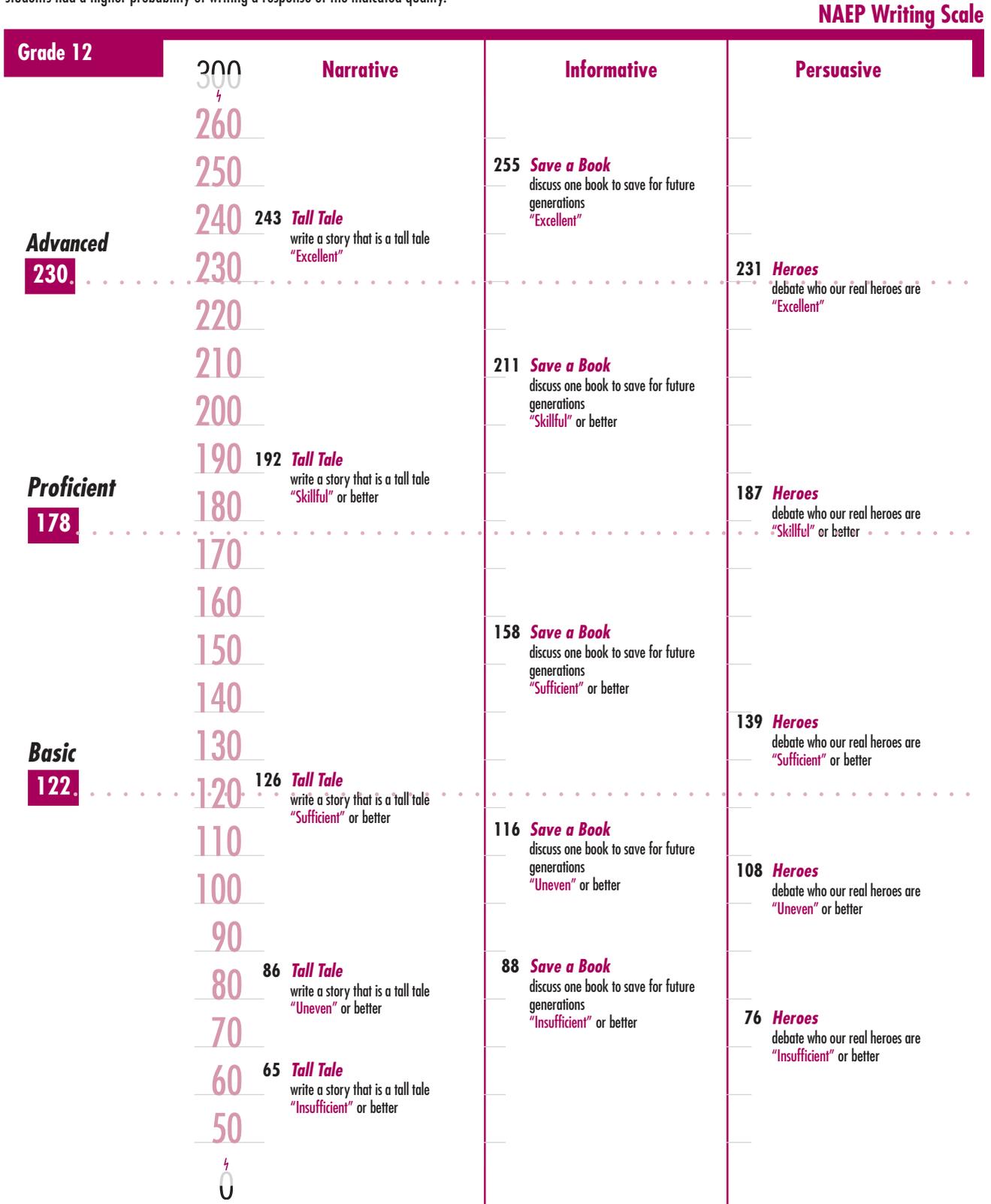
This map describes the knowledge or skill associated with answering individual writing tasks. The map identifies the score point at which students had a higher probability of writing a response of the indicated quality.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Each grade 8 writing task in the 2002 writing assessment was mapped onto the NAEP 0–300 writing scale. The map shows, for each level on the scoring guide from 2 ("Insufficient") through 6 ("Excellent"), the scale score attained by students who had a 65 percent probability of attaining that level or higher on the scoring guide. Only selected tasks are presented. Scale score ranges for writing achievement levels are referenced on the map. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

**Figure 4.3 Map of selected writing tasks on the NAEP writing scale, by purpose for writing, grade 12: 2002**

This map describes the knowledge or skill associated with answering individual writing tasks. The map identifies the score point at which students had a higher probability of writing a response of the indicated quality.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Each grade 12 writing task in the 2002 writing assessment was mapped onto the NAEP 0–300 writing scale. The map shows, for each level on the scoring guide from 2 ("Insufficient") through 6 ("Excellent"), the scale score attained by students who had a 65 percent probability of attaining that level or higher on the scoring guide. Only selected tasks are presented. Scale score ranges for writing achievement levels are referenced on the map. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

