

Teacher-Friendly Scoring Guide for the Ideas Trait

The ideas trait reflects the piece's content: its central message and details that support that message.

6 EXCEPTIONAL

- A. **Finding a Big Idea:** The writer shows understanding of the topic through personal experience or research. The big idea is clear, coherent, and original.
- B. **Focusing on the Big Idea:** The writer gets at the heart of the topic and writes about it, using original and complex thinking. The big idea is narrow and specific.
- C. **Staying With the Big Idea:** The writer creates meaning by elaborating with details that develop the big idea. Pictures (if present) enhance the idea but aren't necessary for comprehension.
- D. **Using Interesting, Juicy Details:** The writer anticipates what the reader might want to know by providing details that clarify the big idea. He or she has carefully selected details to create meaning for the reader and show what is important.

5 STRONG

4 REFINING

- A. **Finding a Big Idea:** The writer explains a simple idea or tells a simple story with words and pictures. His or her topic is clear but might not be original.
- B. **Focusing on the Big Idea:** The writer remains true to his or her topic, but in a general way. His or her piece may be too broad, fuzzy, and/or unpredictable.
- C. **Staying With the Big Idea:** The writer offers clear thinking, but the information he or she provides is incomplete or irrelevant. He or she fails to flesh out the big idea or veers into a new topic without recognizing it.
- D. **Using Interesting, Juicy Details:** The writer provides details, though not consistently. He or she settles for the simplest way to convey information or tell the story, rather than reaching for details that create a clear picture in the reader's mind.

3 DEVELOPING

2 EMERGING

- A. **Finding a Big Idea:** The writer conveys little information in text or pictures; at most, only the beginning of an idea comes through. An oral reading by the writer is needed to identify the topic.
- B. **Focusing on the Big Idea:** The writer provides text, pictures, and other elements that are so unrecognizable or random that the reader can't pinpoint the big idea. What matters to the writer about this topic is unclear.
- C. **Staying With the Big Idea:** The writer does not extend a clear message. Letter strings indicate that he or she is trying to express something about the topic, but the reader cannot discern precisely what that is.
- D. **Using Interesting, Juicy Details:** The writer must read his or her writing out loud and explain drawings for the reader to understand what he or she has to say about the topic. He or she has left many of the reader's questions unanswered.

1 RUDIMENTARY