

Teacher-Friendly Scoring Guide for the Voice Trait

The voice trait reflects the tone of the piece—the personal stamp of the writer, which is achieved through a strong understanding of purpose and audience.

6 EXCEPTIONAL

- A. **Expressing a Feeling:** The writer expresses a distinct tone: bittersweet, compassionate, funny, frustrated, scared, and so on. He or she uses language that speaks to the intended audience.
- B. **Communicating With Sparkle and Pizzazz:** The writer takes real risks to create a truly individual piece of writing. He or she has found an original way to address the topic and satisfy the reader.
- C. **Reaching Out to the Reader:** The writer is mindful of the audience and connects purposefully to the audience. Clearly, it matters to the writer that the reader “gets it.”
- D. **Saying Things in New Ways:** The writer expresses himself or herself in unique ways. He or she “owns” the topic by addressing the big idea behind it distinctively.

5 STRONG

4 REFINING

- A. **Expressing a Feeling:** The writer expresses a tone, but it’s general: happy, sad, mad. Oversize letters, exclamation points, underlining, repetition, and pictures are used for emphasis.
- B. **Communicating With Sparkle and Pizzazz:** The writer offers a fresh word, interesting image, and/or unusual detail here and there. But, for the most part, he or she uses routine language.
- C. **Reaching Out to the Reader:** The writer connects with the reader intermittently. He or she only allows a sneak peek into what matters or is interesting to him or her.
- D. **Saying Things in New Ways:** The writer approaches the topic predictably. What he or she thinks or feels about the big idea shows up in pictures or in an occasional colorful word or phrase.

3 DEVELOPING

2 EMERGING

- A. **Expressing a Feeling:** The writer doesn’t express a tone. He or she has not provided any evidence of how he or she feels about the topic.
- B. **Communicating With Sparkle and Pizzazz:** The writer offers “plain-Jane” letters, words, and/or sentences. The writing feels like it came off an assembly line.
- C. **Reaching Out to the Reader:** The writer provides no evidence that he or she has considered the audience; the writing may be copied from another source. He or she writes generically about the topic.
- D. **Saying Things in New Ways:** The writer’s work lacks a point of view. He or she produces drawing and/or writing that feels forced, as if responding to a simple question.

1 RUDIMENTARY