

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 Topic:** The writer offers a clear, central theme or a simple, original story line that is memorable.
- B. **Focusing the Topic:** The writer narrows the theme or story line to create a piece that is clear, tight, and manageable.
- C. **Developing the Topic:** The writer provides enough critical evidence to support the theme and shows insight on the topic, or he or she tells the story in a fresh way through an original, unpredictable plot.
- D. **Using Details:** The writer offers credible, accurate details that create pictures in the reader's mind, from the beginning of the piece to the end. Those details provide the reader with evidence of the writer's knowledge about and/or experience with the topic.

5 STRONG

4 REFINING

- A. **Finding a Topic:** The writer offers a recognizable but broad theme or story line. He or she stays on topic, but in a predictable way.
- B. **Focusing the Topic:** The writer needs to crystallize his or her topic around the central theme or story line. He or she does not focus on a specific aspect of the topic.
- C. **Developing the Topic:** The writer draws on personal knowledge and experience but does not offer a unique perspective. He or she does not probe deeply, but instead gives the reader only a glimpse at aspects of the topic.
- D. **Using Details:** The writer offers details, but they do not always hit the mark because they are inaccurate or irrelevant. He or she does not create a picture in the reader's mind because key questions about the central theme or story line have not been addressed.

3 DEVELOPING

2 EMERGING

- A. **Finding a Topic:** The writer does not settle on a topic and, therefore, may offer only a series of unfocused, repetitious, and/or random thoughts.
- B. **Focusing the Topic:** The writer does not narrow his or her topic in a meaningful way. It's hard to tell what the writer thinks is important since he or she devotes equal importance to each piece of information.
- C. **Developing the Topic:** The writer creates a piece that is so short that the reader cannot fully understand or appreciate what he or she wants to say. The writer may simply be restating an assigned topic or responding to a prompt without devoting much thought or effort to it.
- D. **Using Details:** The writer clearly devotes little attention to details. The writing contains limited or completely inaccurate information. After reading the piece, the reader is left with many unanswered questions.

1 RUDIMENTARY