Montana Comprehensive Assessment System (MontCAS, Phase 2)

Criterion-Referenced Test (CRT)

COMMON CONSTRUCTED-RESPONSE ITEM RELEASE
READING, GRADE 8

2005

OPI

OFFICE OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Reading
Session 1

Tracy Chevalier's novel Girl with a Pearl Earring *is about a young girl named Griet who lives in the Dutch city of Delft in the 1600s. Read this passage to learn what happens when Griet's family has some important visitors, and then answer the questions that follow.*

Girl with a Pearl Earring

Tracy Chevalier

My mother did not tell me they were coming. Afterwards she said she did not want me to appear nervous. I was surprised, for I thought she knew me well. Strangers would think I was calm. I did not cry as a baby. Only my mother would note the tightness along my jaw, the widening of my already wide eyes.

I was chopping vegetables in the kitchen when I heard voices outside our front door—a woman's, bright as polished brass, and a man's, low and dark like the wood of the table I was working on. They were the kind of voices we heard rarely in our house. I could hear rich carpets in their voices, books and pearls and fur.

I was glad that earlier I had scrubbed the front steps so hard.

My mother's voice—a cooking pot, a flagon—approached from the front room. They were coming to the kitchen. I pushed the leeks I had been chopping into place, then set the knife on the table, wiped my hands on my apron and pressed my lips together to smooth them.

My mother appeared in the doorway, her eyes two warnings. Behind her the woman had to duck her head because she was so tall, taller than the man following her.

All of our family, even my father and brother, were small.

The woman looked as if she had been blown about by the wind, although it was a calm day. Her cap was askew so that tiny blond curls escaped and hung about her forehead like bees which she swatted at impatiently several times. Her collar needed straightening and was not as crisp as it could be. She pushed her gray mantle* back from her shoulders, and I saw then that under her dark blue dress a baby was growing. It would arrive by the year's end, or before.

The woman's face was like an oval serving plate, flashing at times, dull at others. Her eyes were two light brown buttons, a color I had rarely seen coupled with blond hair. She made a show of watching me hard, but could not fix her attention on me, her eyes darting about the room.

"This is the girl, then," she said abruptly.

"This is my daughter, Griet," my mother replied. I nodded respectfully to the man and woman.

"Well. She's not very big. Is she strong enough?" As the woman turned to look at the man, a fold of her mantle caught the handle of the knife I had been using, knocking it off the table so that it spun across the floor.

The woman cried out.

"Catharina," the man said calmly. He spoke her name as if he held cinnamon in his mouth. The woman stopped, making an effort to quiet herself.

I stepped over and picked up the knife, polishing the blade on my apron before placing it back on the table. The knife had brushed against the vegetables. I set a piece of carrot back in its place.

The man was watching me, his eyes grey like the sea. He had a long, angular face, and his expression was steady, in contrast to his wife's, which flickered like a candle. He had no beard or moustache, and I was glad, for it gave him a clean appearance. He wore a black cloak over his shoulders, a white shirt, and a fine lace collar. His hat pressed into hair the red of brick washed by rain.

"What have you been doing here, Griet?" he asked.

I was surprised by the question but knew enough to hide it. "Chopping vegetables, sir. For the soup."

I always laid vegetables out in a circle, each with its own section like a slice of pie. There were five slices: red cabbage, onions, leeks, carrots, and turnips. I had used a knife edge to shape each slice, and placed a carrot disc in the center.

*mantle: a cape or shawl

The man tapped his finger on the table. "Are they laid out in the order in which they will go into the soup?" he suggested, studying the circle.

"No, sir." I hesitated. I could not say why I had laid out the vegetables as I did. I simply set them as I felt they should be, but I was too frightened to say so to a gentleman.

"I see you have separated the whites," he said, indicating the turnips and onions. "And then the orange and the purple, they do not sit together. Why is that?" He picked up a shred of cabbage and a piece of carrot and shook them like dice in his hand.

I looked at my mother, who nodded slightly.

"The colors fight when they are side by side, sir."

He arched his eyebrows, as if he had not expected such a response. "And do you spend much time setting out the vegetables before you make the soup?"

"Oh no, sir," I replied, confused. I did not want him to think I was idle.

From the corner of my eye I saw a movement. My sister, Agnes, was peering round the doorpost and had shaken her head at my response. I did not often lie. I looked down.

The man turned his head slightly and Agnes disappeared. He dropped the pieces of carrot and cabbage into their slices. The cabbage shred fell partly into the onions. I wanted to reach over and tease it into place. I did not, but he knew that I wanted to. He was testing me.

"That's enough prattle," the woman declared. Though she was annoyed with his attention to me, it was me she frowned at. "Tomorrow, then?" She looked at the man before sweeping out of the room, my mother behind her. The man glanced once more at what was to be the soup, then nodded at me and followed the women.

When my mother returned I was sitting by the vegetable wheel. I waited for her to speak. She was hunching her shoulders as if against a winter chill, though it was summer and the kitchen was hot.

"You are to start tomorrow as their maid. If you do well, you will be paid eight stuivers a day. You will live with them."

I pressed my lips together.

"Don't look at me like that, Griet," my mother said. "We have to, now your father has lost his trade."

22. What kind of a person is Griet? Describe her personality, using details from the passage to support your answer.

Scoring Guide

Score	Description
4	Response provides a clear and thorough description of Griet's personality. The description should address more than one facet of her personality and may include some discussion of Griet's relationships with other people. The response includes details from the passage that fully support the description.
3	Response provides a general description of Griet's personality. The description lacks some development and/or specific details from the passage as support.
2	Response provides a limited description of her personality. The response includes little or no support from the passage and may include some misunderstanding or misinterpretation.
1	Response shows a minimal understanding of the question. Response may give at least one accurate fact about Griet or provide a vague attempt to describe her personality.
0	Response is totally incorrect or irrelevant.
Blank	No response.

Scoring notes:

Personality traits may include:

- she is good at hiding her feelings
- she is respectful
- she is careful
- she pays attention to details
- she is a hard worker

Score Point 4

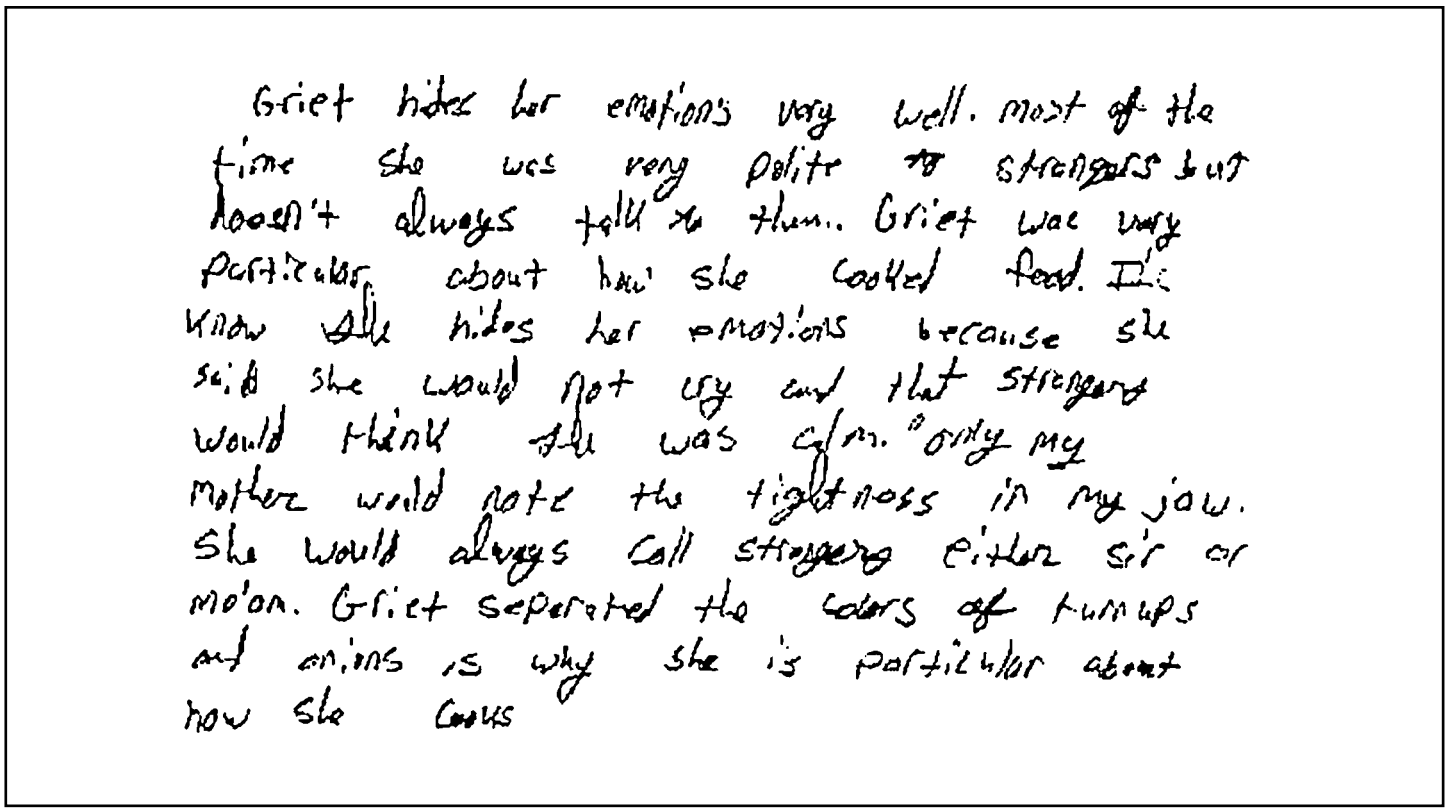
Sample 1

Griet is a particular person. She likes things to be a certain way, but she doesn't know why. She sets the vegetables in a certain way and when the man gets them out of order, she longs to make it right. She is also very observant, she notices everything about the people. She says how the lady's collar could be more crisp and she thinks the man looks good without a beard or mustache. Griet can hide her emotions very well, for the most part. She didn't cry when the strangers came and she was very calm when her mother told her that she was going to be a maid. Although, the man can see the yearning in her to put the vegetables in order and her sister can see that Griet is lying. Griet is a very good child, it seems like she can handle anything that is thrown her way.

Insightful response with good relevant support. Clear and thorough description of Griet's personality. Description addresses more than one facet of her personality: "particular," "observant," and "hide[s] her emotions very well."

Score Point 3

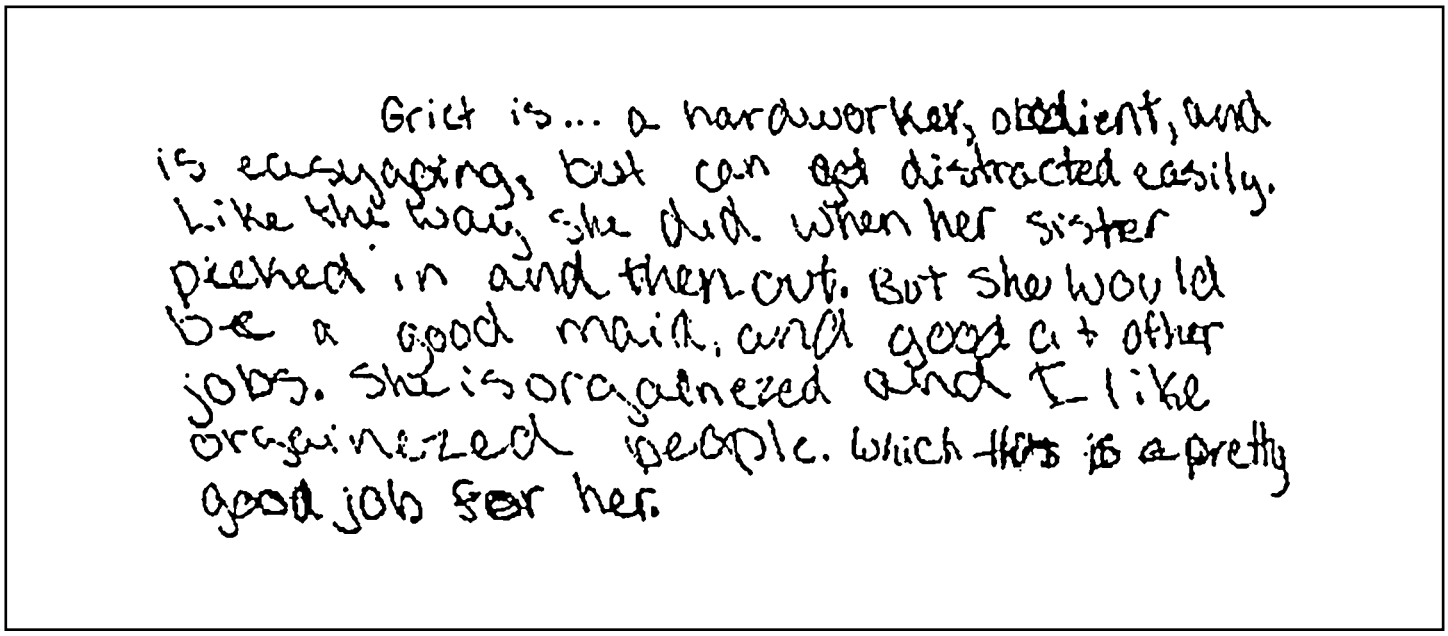
Sample 1


Griet hides her emotions very well. most of the time she was very polite to strangers but doesn't always tell to them.. Griet was very particular about how she cooked food. I'd know she hides her emotions because she said she would not cry and that strangers would think she was calm. "only my mother would note the tightness in my jaw. She would always call strangers either sir or ma'am. Griet seperated the colors of turnups and onions is why she is particular about how she cooks

General description of Griet's personality. Lacks some development and specifics, and is somewhat repetitive ("hides her emotions" is mentioned more than once).

Score Point 2

Sample 1


Grick is... a hardworker, obedient, and is easygoing, but can get distracted easily. Like the way she did when her sister peeked in and then cut. But she would be a good maid, and good at other jobs. She is organized and I like organized people. Which this is a pretty good job for her.

Lists some personality traits, all based on the story, but does not support with details or development.

Score Point 1

Sample 1

Griet seems nice and hardworking person who is very helpfull.

A minimal, brief statement about what kind of person Griet is.

Score Point 0

Sample 1

Outside cooking ? I don't know

Incorrect and irrelevant.

Reading
Session 3

Read this passage to learn about a woman who helped to make our lives safer, and then answer the questions that follow.

Mary Pennington

Nancy Smiler Levinson

It was a hot summer afternoon in 1884. Twelve-year-old Mary Pennington was reading on the veranda on her brick house in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Usually she enjoyed stories, but that day she started reading a chemistry book she had found open in her father's library.

Mary was in the middle of a chapter on oxygen and nitrogen when she was struck with fascination about those two chemical elements. "Suddenly I realized that even though oxygen and nitrogen had no color, taste, or odor, they really existed," Mary remembered years later. The subject of chemistry engaged her so thoroughly that she called that moment of discovery a "milestone" in her life.

She decided to study chemistry, although it was rare for women in those days to receive education beyond basic reading, arithmetic, sewing, and proper manners taught at a school for young ladies.

Despite this, after graduating from a young ladies' school, one day Mary boldly walked into the office of a dean at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia and announced that she wished to enroll in the science department.

The dean paused. Then, to Mary's surprise, he gave his consent. When Mary told her parents, they were shocked. Finally, however, they came to accept the idea, and they gave their daughter full support.

Mary finished all her classes toward a degree, but the university board of trustees refused to grant her one because she was a woman. Her professors, however, declared her a special case and awarded her an advanced Ph.D. degree anyway. Afterward, in 1895, she enrolled at Yale University and studied biological chemistry.

Dr. Mary Pennington then went to work as a bacteriologist. That was at the turn of the century, a time when people often got sick or died from impure milk because there were no laws to ensure sanitary conditions in dairies. Not even ice cream that was sold to children from sidewalk pushcarts was safe!

In laboratories and dairies, Mary tested bacteria toxicity levels and regulated temperature controls in milk processing and storage. Her results and guidelines helped promote the earliest laws that improved the quality and safety of milk production throughout the country.

Later, Mary was hired by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, where she supervised fifty-five men in experiments with fish and poultry skinning, scaling, packing, and deep-freezing methods. Her work there became the basis for further improved health standards.

Mary then turned her attention to a problem on the railroads—keeping perishable foods fresh on refrigerator cars. Rails were the link between the nation's farms and its people. And the people liked variety when they sat down to eat. They wanted fresh meats, poultry, and fish, firm fruit, and crisp salads. But how long could such food last as it rolled across the country before the lettuce wilted and the meat turned to rot?

. . . The earliest refrigerator cars were designed with air ventilation openings for cooling. Then came compartments that were filled and refilled with ice, which was better than air ventilation as a coolant, but still not wholly satisfactory.

How was this kind of puzzle to be solved? Certainly not in a laboratory! There was only one thing for Mary to do. She climbed aboard a train, set up equipment in a test car that was coupled between a refrigerator car and the caboose, and rode the rails tens of thousands of miles. Using gauges that

determined temperature and humidity, she tested foods under all kinds of conditions and in all kinds of weather—from winters in Maine to scorching summers in the Imperial Valley of California. She investigated ice bunkers, insulation, temperature control, food packing, loading, and warehousing.

In particular, she noted that insulation was too thin, and cracks in the cars caused the insulation to loosen altogether. The most dangerous condition of all, she reported, came from water that dripped on the floors. In that water and in the moist air above, bacteria grew and settled on the foods. Some of that bacteria caused deadly illnesses.

Mary redesigned refrigerator cars with added insulation in ice bunkers, walls, floors, and racks. She also designed a forced-air system to give maximum air circulation throughout each car. This was the best solution for that time, and new refrigerator cars were a marked improvement for railroad food preservation and for the health and safety of the American people. But for years, railroad officials stubbornly resisted making the suggested changes. Changes would cost money, and they didn't want to spend any more than necessary. Mary fought long and hard until she finally convinced railroad owners to take the right action.

Through her continued work, Dr. Mary Pennington set standards that helped direct food processing, refrigeration, and storage methods. Her standards and regulations governed much of the United States food industry for years to come.

67. How does the author keep the reader's interest throughout the passage? Use examples from the passage to support your answer.

Scoring Guide

Score	Description
4	Response provides a clear and thorough explanation of ways that the author keeps the reader's interest throughout the passage. The response includes examples or specific information from the passage that fully support the description.
3	Response provides a general explanation of ways that the author keeps the reader's interest throughout the passage. The response lacks some development and/or specificity.
2	Response provides a limited explanation of ways that the author keeps the reader's interest throughout the passage. The explanation contains little or unclear supporting information.
1	Response shows minimal understanding of the question. It may include a vague explanation or some information from the passage that keeps the reader's interest.
0	Response is totally incorrect or irrelevant.
Blank	No response.

Scoring notes:

Examples may include:

- including interesting information
- using interesting details
- making the passage easily readable
- presenting information in chronological order

Score Point 4

Sample 1

I think the author keeps people's attention by asking questions like, "But how long could such food last as it rolled across the country before the lettuce wilted and the meat turned to rot" and "How was this kind of puzzle to be solved." I also think she keeps reader's attention by adding interesting little facts that keep you thinking, like, "Not even ice cream that was sold to children from sidewalk pushcarts was safe" and "She climbed aboard a train, set up equipment in a test car that was coupled between a refrigerator car and the caboose, and rode the rails tens of thousands of miles." I think that's how the author keep reader's attention and I think it works because it keeps them wondering and thinking and wanting to know more.

Clear and thorough explanation of ways the author kept the reader's attention. Excellent specific support of techniques "asking questions," "adding interesting little facts," and "keeps them wondering and thinking and wanting to know more."

Score Point 3

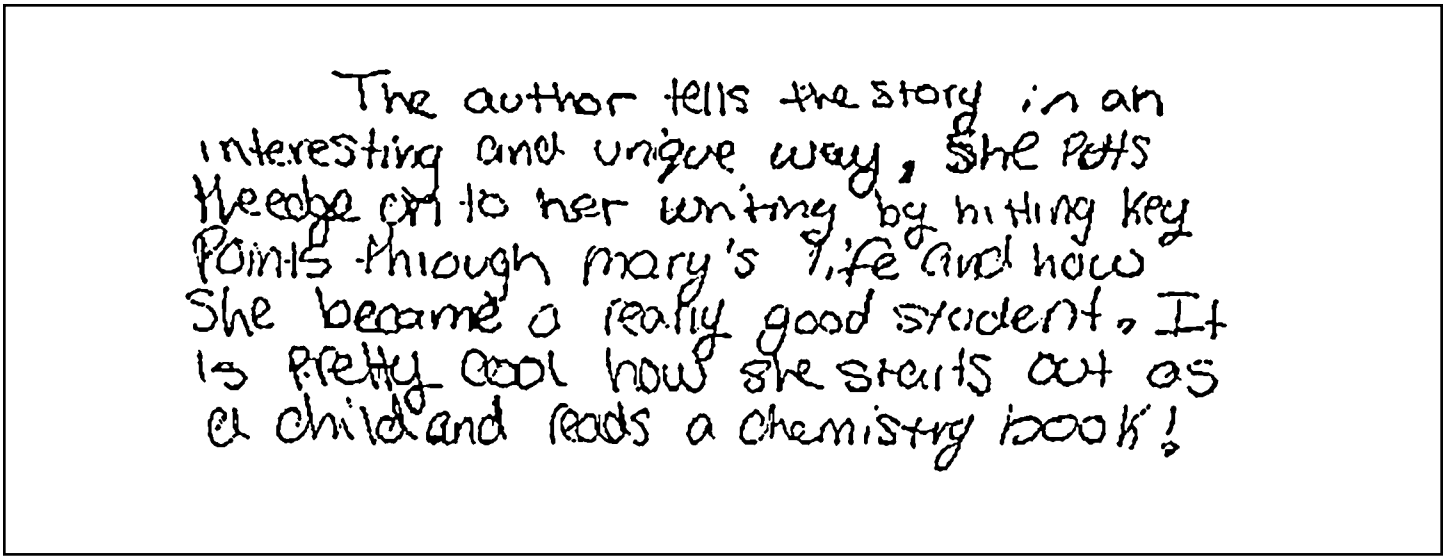
Sample 1

The author keeps the reader interested by stating problems and facts that Mary has to over come. Also by doing that the reader is interested in how she may do that. For example the fight with the railroad managers who didn't want to change there cars. With stating a problem like that the reader wants to know what she is going to do. It keeps the reader hooked and interested so they keep reading.

General explanation. Lacks some development and specific support.

Score Point 2

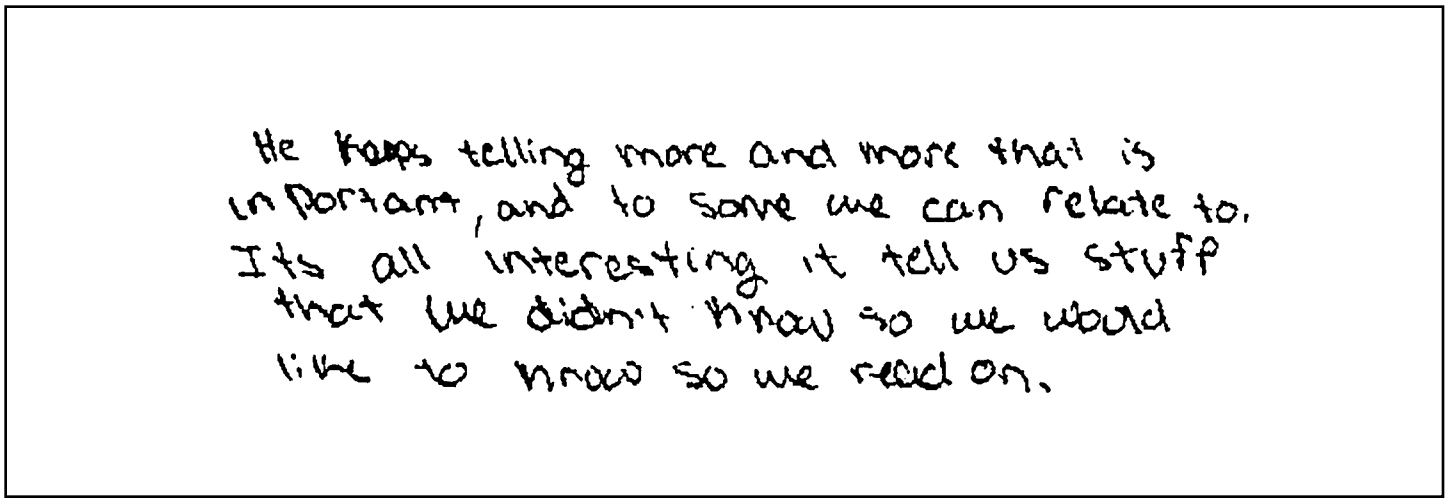
Sample 1


The author tells the story in an interesting and unique way. She puts feedback on to her writing by hitting key points through mary's life and how she became a really good student. It is pretty cool how she starts out as a child and reads a chemistry book!

Limited explanation of how the author kept the reader's attention with very little support.

Score Point 1

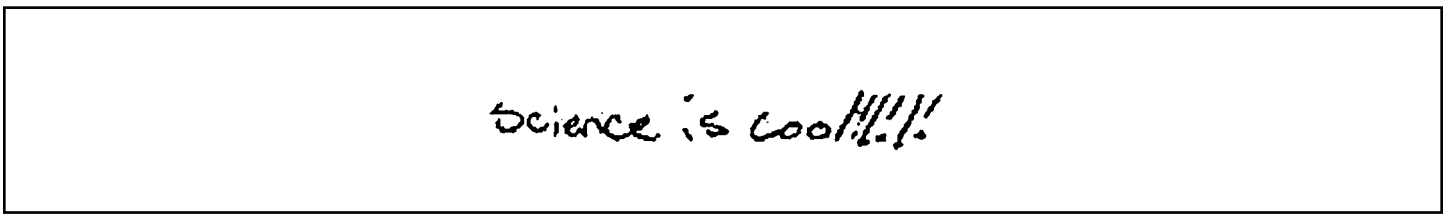
Sample 1



Vague attempt. No support from text.

Score Point 0

Sample 1



Irrelevant.