Why Government? Power, Public Needs, and Accountability

First & Last Name: _____ Date: _____

CENTRAL QUESTION

When does government serve the people, and how can people judge its performance?

Learning objective

Analyze four source sets, evaluate evidence and limitations, and defend a civic judgment through interdisciplinary inquiry.

Demonstration of learning

Complete the daily evidence tasks, earn a score on 15 multiple choice items, and write a source based RACE response using the Argumentative and Conventions rubrics.

Standards and task alignment

NJSLS Social Studies: 6.3.8.CivicsPI.1; 6.1.8.CivicsPI.3.b. Applied in daily analysis and the final civic judgment. NJSLS ELA (2023): RI.CR.6.1 (evidence), RI.CI.6.2 (central ideas), W.AW.6.1 (argument), SL.PE.6.1 (discussion). National CCSS: RH.6-8.1, RH.6-8.2, RH.6-8.7; WHST.6-8.1 and WHST.6-8.9. NJSLS / CCSS Math: 6.RP.A.3 (ratios and percent); Science, technology, arts, history, and civic participation are integrated through the named tasks; no additional science or arts code is claimed.

Five lesson sequence

Days 1 to 4: read, annotate, analyze, collaborate, and write. Day 5: 15 question assessment and extended RACE response. Each lesson is designed for 40 minutes; teacher notes provide timing and supports.

Academic vocabulary

government: institutions that make and enforce public decisions; authority: recognized power to act; public good: a shared benefit; accountability: obligation to explain and answer for decisions; consent: agreement; equity: fairness that considers barriers

Source integrity

Readings are original Ma’at instructional syntheses. Exact historical excerpts are marked. Classroom datasets and scenarios are labeled; they are not historical records or actual government budgets. Source references appear on page 13.

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DAY 1

Source A | Purposes and promises

Do Now

List two problems a community cannot easily solve through one household acting alone.

[1] The Preamble to the United States Constitution identifies purposes for the new government. Primary excerpt, 1787: 'establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare'. These goals include fair treatment, public peace, shared defense, and community well being. A purpose is a standard for judging government; it is not proof that the standard has been met.

[2] Governments make decisions that affect many people, collect revenue, and organize services. A government can build a road or support a court, but people must still ask who benefits and who carries the costs. A private club's rules apply to its members; a government's laws operate through public authority within its jurisdiction. Neither authority nor popularity automatically makes a decision just.

[3] The Preamble also speaks of liberty and future generations. Reading these purposes together creates a difficult question: how can officials protect public safety while respecting individual freedom? Citizens can test an action against several purposes rather than assuming that one goal always defeats another.

Annotation task: underline a central claim; box one civic term; mark one detail as evidence; add a question where evidence or authority needs clarification.

Six Purposes of Government

Use Source A to add a symbol and a measurable indicator for each purpose.

Purpose	Symbol	Measurable indicator
Union		
Justice		
Peace		
Defense		
Welfare		
Liberty		

DAY 1

Evidence, application, and reflection

1. Source analysis

Explain the difference between a stated purpose and evidence that a purpose has been achieved. Cite one phrase and one explanation from Source A. Identify one conclusion the evidence supports and one stronger conclusion it cannot establish.

2. Interdisciplinary investigation

ELA and visual arts: create a six cell purpose chart for union, justice, peace, defense, welfare, and liberty. Add a symbol and a measurable indicator for each. Use the workspace for calculations, a chart, diagram, or written plan.

Quick Write

Which two purposes might come into tension during an emergency? Explain the tension. Cite the source letter and paragraph or dataset.

Exit Ticket

Name one indicator that would help evaluate a public service.

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DAY 2

Source B | Consent and the rule of law

Do Now

Is a rule fair simply because most people support it? Give an initial reason.

[1] In a representative democracy, people select officials who make public decisions. Consent of the governed means that legitimate authority rests on the people, not on an official's personal wishes. Elections are one mechanism of consent. Public meetings, petitions, a free press, and lawful criticism allow people to continue participating between elections.

[2] Rule of law means that officials and residents are subject to law. Limited government means that public power has boundaries. These principles work together: if an official can ignore rules whenever convenient, a written limit offers little protection. Courts, oversight, and public scrutiny can help enforce boundaries.

[3] A majority can select a policy without having unlimited power over a minority. Imagine a class approving a rule that only its largest group may speak. The vote shows a numerical majority, but it fails a fairness test because it removes others' participation. This classroom analogy is an instructional example, not a report of an actual election. Evaluating legitimacy requires attention to both decision procedures and protected rights.

Annotation task: underline a central claim; box one civic term; mark one detail as evidence; add a question where evidence or authority needs clarification.

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DAY 2

Evidence, application, and reflection

1. Source analysis

Trace the chain from consent to elections to accountability. Identify one weakness if participation ends after election day. Identify one conclusion the evidence supports and one stronger conclusion it cannot establish.

2. Interdisciplinary investigation

Technology and media literacy: design a public decision log with fields for proposal, authority, evidence, vote, affected groups, and review date. Explain what private information should be excluded. Use the workspace for calculations, a chart, diagram, or written plan.

Quick Write

Distinguish the power to win a vote from the authority to remove another person’s rights. Cite the source letter and paragraph or dataset.

Exit Ticket

How does rule of law limit officials?

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DAY 3

Source C | A budget is a civic argument

Do Now

If a budget is fixed, what must happen when one category receives more money?

[1] Instructional dataset, not an actual municipal budget. A community has $100,000 available. It proposes $40,000 for safe water, $25,000 for road repairs, $20,000 for a youth library, and $15,000 for emergency supplies. The proposal uses the entire amount. The categories represent choices, not evidence that the services are equally effective.

[2] Water serves 400 households, road repairs serve 250, the library serves 200, and emergency supplies cover all 500 households. These groups overlap. Adding the household counts would count some families more than once. Cost per household served can help compare programs, but a lower cost does not automatically mean a program is more valuable. Preventing a dangerous water failure may deserve priority even if another service costs less per household.

[3] Opportunity cost is the benefit given up when resources are used for one choice instead of another. Increasing the library allocation by $5,000 requires reducing another allocation or finding additional revenue. Responsible public reasoning identifies the tradeoff and explains its effect on people, rather than describing every desirable service as free.

Annotation task: underline a central claim; box one civic term; mark one detail as evidence; add a question where evidence or authority needs clarification.

Proposed Community Budget

Source C classroom dataset. Use the figures to complete the analysis on the next page.

Public service	Proposed funding	Households served	Share / Cost per household
Safe water	$40,000	400	
Road repairs	$25,000	250	
Youth library	$20,000	200	
Emergency supplies	$15,000	500	

DAY 3

Evidence, application, and reflection

1. Source analysis

Calculate each category’s budget percentage and cost per household. Explain why the counts cannot be added to determine unique households served. Identify one conclusion the evidence supports and one stronger conclusion it cannot establish.

2. Interdisciplinary investigation

Math and financial literacy: move $5,000 between categories. Produce a updated balanced budget and justify the opportunity cost using a public purpose. Use the workspace for calculations, a chart, diagram, or written plan.

Quick Write

Why should officials consider need as well as cost per household? Cite the source letter and paragraph or dataset.

Exit Ticket

What is the total budget after your reallocation?

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DAY 4

Source D | Whose protection counts?

Do Now

Can a person have rights even if that person cannot vote? Explain.

[1] The Fourteenth Amendment, ratified in 1868, prohibits a state from denying any person equal protection of the laws. Primary excerpt: 'nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.' Its wording refers to persons, not only voters. The amendment followed the Civil War and the destruction of legal slavery through the Thirteenth Amendment, with its stated punishment exception.

[2] African Americans pursued freedom through military service, organizing, education, petitions, and political participation. Constitutional change did not immediately eliminate discrimination. Hiram Revels entered the Senate in 1870, becoming its first African American member, while struggles over political rights continued. A legal guarantee and lived conditions must therefore be examined separately.

[3] A community evaluation should ask whether services are accessible across neighborhoods and whether people can challenge unfair treatment. A budget can balance perfectly while excluding residents. Equal protection provides a constitutional reason to examine exclusion, while evidence about barriers helps determine what should change. Fairness requires more than assuming that the same written promise produces the same lived experience.

Annotation task: underline a central claim; box one civic term; mark one detail as evidence; add a question where evidence or authority needs clarification.

Reading Equal Protection

Use Source D to record evidence and prepare for the source analysis.

Historical evidence	What does it show?	Source D paragraph
Fourteenth Amendment (1868)		
African American civic action		
Hiram Revels enters the Senate (1870)		

DAY 4

Evidence, application, and reflection

1. Source analysis

Compare the scope of “any person” with the idea that only voters deserve services. Use both paragraphs 1 and 3. End with one sentence explaining how this source changes or complicates an earlier source in the packet. Identify one conclusion the evidence supports and one stronger conclusion it cannot establish.

2. Interdisciplinary investigation

History and data: design a service access survey with three neutral questions. Identify a sampling method that includes residents who lack internet access. Use the workspace for calculations, a chart, diagram, or written plan.

Quick Write

Explain why a constitutional amendment can be necessary without immediately solving every injustice. Cite the source letter and paragraph or dataset.

Exit Ticket

Name one way to test whether a service reaches excluded residents.

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DAY 5

Multiple choice • 15 points total

Choose the best answer using Sources A to D. You may refer to the readings. Each item is worth 1 point. Use the model assumptions when calculating.

1. Which evidence best demonstrates that a stated public purpose has been achieved?

A. Measured improvement in access to a service
B. A purpose appears in a document
C. A program has an attractive name
D. An official repeats a slogan

2. A leader refuses to follow a court’s lawful order. Which principle is most directly threatened?

A. Rule of law
B. Apportionment
C. Opportunity cost
D. Direct democracy

3. Why is a majority vote excluding all minority speakers inadequate evidence of legitimacy?

A. Voting procedures must operate alongside rights protections
B. Minority groups always decide policy
C. Only unanimous decisions may govern
D. All majority decisions are invalid

4. Which budget category receives 25 percent of the model funds?

A. Water
B. Road repairs
C. Library
D. Emergency supplies

5. Officials report that a service is efficient because its cost per household fell. Which finding most challenges that conclusion as a complete civic judgment?

A. The report defines its denominator clearly
B. The program kept records of spending
C. The calculation uses the correct total
D. Some households lost access when the cost fell

6. Residents approve a budget that excludes nonvoters from water service. Which reasoning best uses the readings?

A. The vote establishes fairness because all eligible voters participated
B. Consent through voting does not remove obligations to protect persons
C. Low cost per household settles who deserves access
D. A balanced budget makes equal protection irrelevant

7. If the library gains $5,000 without new revenue, what must follow?

A. All categories can remain unchanged
B. The budget automatically gains revenue
C. Other spending must decrease by $5,000
D. The allocation becomes a surplus

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DAY 5

Multiple choice • 15 points total

Choose the best answer using Sources A to D. You may refer to the readings. Each item is worth 1 point. Use the model assumptions when calculating.

8. What does opportunity cost identify?

A. The benefit sacrificed by choosing another use

B. The tax rate in every community

C. The total number of voters

D. Every dollar already spent

9. The library gains $5,000 and water loses $5,000. Which claim is supported without more evidence?

A. Water needs must have declined by the transferred amount

B. The total remains balanced but effects on access need investigation

C. The same number of households must still be served

D. The change necessarily increases fairness

10. What does Revels’s entry into the Senate establish?

A. The abolition of state governments

B. The immediate end of discrimination

C. A milestone in African American political participation

D. Universal voting access in 1870

11. Which finding would best expose unequal service access?

A. A budget totals correctly

B. Comparable neighborhoods face different documented barriers

C. An official promises fairness

D. A service has a low average cost

12. Which comparison best evaluates government beyond efficiency?

A. Cost evidence together with rights and access evidence

B. Popularity alone

C. A slogan together with a logo

D. Cost alone

13. Which survey plan best tests unequal service access?

A. Sample households across neighborhoods with both online and offline responses

B. Post one open link and treat respondents as every resident

C. Ask only officials whether their own plan is fair

D. Count all overlapping service lists as unique households

14. Which is the strongest qualified conclusion about the model budget?

A. It eliminates opportunity costs

B. It proves every need is met

C. It proves the cheapest service is best

D. It balances but requires further evidence about fairness

15. A report cites low costs, a majority vote, and an inspiring mission. What is still needed to defend a claim of accountable government?

A. A combined count of overlapping service users

B. Evidence of rights protection, access, and meaningful challenge procedures

C. A second vote without access for excluded residents

D. A longer mission statement with the same claims

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DAY 5

RACE writing assessment

Evaluate this claim: A government serves its community only when it provides services efficiently. Develop a qualified claim using Sources A, B, and D and the budget evidence in Source C. Explain why efficiency alone may be an incomplete measure.

Restate the issue. Answer with a defensible claim. Cite at least three accurate details from at least two sources, including the required data or calculation. Explain how the evidence supports your judgment and address a limitation or competing consideration. A source citation may read: (Source C, paragraph 2).

RACE Evidence Planner | Write five paragraphs.

1. Introduction • Restate the issue and give your claim. _____
2. Body 1 • Cite a source that supports your judgment. _____
3. Body 2 • Cite budget evidence and explain your calculation. _____
4. Body 3 • Address a limitation or competing consideration. _____
5. Conclusion • Explain what your evidence shows about judging government. _____

Extended response • continue on page 13

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DAY 5

Continue, verify, and revise

Revision check: accurate claim; precise civic vocabulary; three cited details; correct denominator and units; explanation of evidence; one limitation or competing consideration.

Report the three scores separately. Multiple choice is out of 15. Argumentative writing and Conventions are each scored out of 5 using the two rubrics at the end.

Source references • accessed November 9, 2026

Source A: https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript

Source B: https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript

Source B: https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/bill-of-rights-transcript

Source C: https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript

Source D: https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/amendments-11-27

Source D: https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/senate-stories/First-African-American-Senator.htm

Instructional datasets, scenarios, diagrams requested in tasks, and explanatory prose: Ma’at Cultural Curriculum Consultants, 2026. Public document wording is cited to its custodian. Primary quotations are distinguished from original synthesis.

Extended response continuation

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Grades 6–8 Argumentative Rubric

Based on the New Jersey Student Learning Standards for English Language Arts

Student Name _____ Date _____ Class Section _____

Argumentative writing encompasses the development of ideas, focus, organization, and language that students demonstrate in their written responses.

Score Point 5	Score Point 4	Score Point 3	Score Point 2	Score Point 1
Ideas and Focus				
The response demonstrates an ability to provide a focused written response to an on-demand prompt. It demonstrates a clear understanding of the task and purpose. A score point 5 response may reflect the following characteristics: • a claim that clearly introduces a topic or issue • relevant and accurate data and evidence that clearly support the claim • logical reasoning that clearly demonstrates understanding of the topic or text • (G7 only) clearly acknowledges an alternate or opposing claim • (G8 only) clearly acknowledges and distinguishes an alternate or opposing claim	The response demonstrates an ability to provide a mostly focused written response to an on-demand prompt. It demonstrates a general understanding of the task and purpose. A score point 4 response may reflect the following characteristics: • a claim that generally introduces a topic or issue • accurate data and evidence that generally support the claim • logical reasoning that generally demonstrates understanding of the topic or text • (G7 only) generally acknowledges an alternate or opposing claim • (G8 only) generally acknowledges and distinguishes an alternate or opposing claim	The response demonstrates an ability to provide a basic written response to an on-demand prompt. It demonstrates some understanding of the task and purpose. A score point 3 response may reflect the following characteristics: • a claim that somewhat introduces a topic or issue • data and evidence that somewhat support the claim (information may be general) • reasoning that somewhat demonstrates understanding of the topic or text • (G7 only) somewhat acknowledges an alternate or opposing claim • (G8 only) somewhat acknowledges or distinguishes an alternate or opposing claim	The response demonstrates an ability to provide a limited written response to an on-demand prompt. It demonstrates partial understanding of the task and purpose. A score point 2 response may reflect the following characteristics: • a claim that attempts to introduce a topic or issue • limited evidence related to the claim (information may be general) • limited or attempted reasoning related to the topic or text • (G7 and G8 only) attempts to acknowledge an alternate or opposing claim	The response demonstrates an ability to provide a minimally written response to an on-demand prompt. It demonstrates minimal understanding of the task and purpose. A score point 1 response may reflect the following characteristics: • a minimal, missing, or unclear claim • minimal, missing, or unclear supporting evidence • minimal, missing, or unclear demonstration of reasoning • (G7 and G8 only) minimal, missing, or unclear acknowledgement of an alternate or opposing claim
Organization				
• a clear introduction that contains clear reasons and relevant evidence to support a claim • a clear organizational structure that presents reasons and evidence logically • a concluding statement or section that clearly follows from the argument presented • (G7 and G8) a conclusion that also clearly supports the argument presented	• a general introduction that contains reasons and relevant evidence to support a claim • an organizational structure that generally presents reasons and evidence logically • a concluding statement or section that generally follows from the argument presented • (G7 and G8) a conclusion that also generally supports the argument presented	• a basic introduction that contains some reasoning and evidence to support a claim • a basic organizational structure that somewhat presents reasons or evidence • a concluding statement or section that somewhat follows from the argument presented • (G7 and G8) a conclusion that also somewhat supports the argument presented	• a limited or attempted introduction to support a claim • a limited or attempted organizational structure that attempts to present reasons or evidence • a concluding statement or section that attempts to relate to the argument presented	• a missing or unclear introduction • a minimal or unclear organizational structure • a missing or unclear concluding statement or section
Expression and Word Choice				
• (G6 only) words, phrases, and clauses that clearly link and clarify the relationships among claim(s), reasons, and evidence • (G7 only) words, phrases, and clauses that clearly create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), reasons, and evidence • (G8 only) words, phrases, and clauses that clearly create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence • establishes and maintains a formal/academic style, approach, and form	• (G6 only) words, phrases, and clauses that generally link and clarify the relationships among claim(s), reasons, and evidence • (G7 only) words, phrases, and clauses that generally create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), reasons, and evidence • (G8 only) words, phrases, and clauses that generally create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence • generally establishes and maintains a formal/academic style, approach, and form	• (G6 only) words, phrases, and clauses that somewhat link or clarify the relationships among claim(s), reasons, or evidence • (G7 only) words, phrases, and clauses that somewhat create cohesion or clarify the relationships among claim(s), reasons, or evidence • (G8 only) words, phrases, and clauses that somewhat create cohesion or clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, or evidence • somewhat establishes a formal/academic style, approach, or form	• (G6 only) words, phrases, or clauses that attempt to link claim(s), reasons, or evidence • (G7 and G8 only) words, phrases, or clauses that attempt to relate claim(s), reasons, or evidence • attempts a formal/academic style, approach, or form	• minimal or unclear use of words, phrases, or clauses to link claim(s) or reasons • minimal or missing formal/academic style, approach, or form

Overall Score _____ / 5 Select the score that best fits the response across all three categories.

Teacher Comments_____

Source: NJDOE NJSLA-A and NJGPA-A Writing Rubrics, pp. 12–14

Grades 6–8 Conventions Rubric

Based on the New Jersey Student Learning Standards for English Language Arts

Student Name _____ Date _____ Class Section _____

Conventions encompass language and the mechanical aspects of writing, such as grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation, that students demonstrate in their written responses.

Score Point 5	Score Point 4	Score Point 3	Score Point 2	Score Point 1
The response demonstrates command of conventions in a written response to an on-demand prompt. **A score point 5 response may reflect the following characteristics:** • Demonstrates command of the system and structure of the English language • Demonstrates command of capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and usage	**The response demonstrates general command of conventions in a written response to an on-demand prompt.** **A score point 4 response may reflect the following characteristics:** • Demonstrates general command of the system and structure of the English language • Demonstrates general command of capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and usage	**The response demonstrates basic command of conventions in a written response to an on-demand prompt.** **A score point 3 response may reflect the following characteristics:** • Demonstrates partial command of the system and structure of the English language • Demonstrates partial command of capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and usage	**The response demonstrates limited command of conventions in a written response to an on-demand prompt.** **A score point 2 response may reflect the following characteristics:** • Demonstrates limited command of the system and structure of the English language • Demonstrates limited command of capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and usage	**The response demonstrates minimal command of conventions in a written response to an on-demand prompt.** **A score point 1 response may reflect the following characteristics:** • Demonstrates minimal command of the system and structure of the English language • Demonstrates minimal or no command of capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and usage

- The NJSLA-A G6–G8 Conventions Rubric will assess grade-level appropriate conventions skills as outlined in the NJSLS-ELA.
- Not all grade-appropriate conventions skills will be demonstrated in an on-demand written response.

Scoring Guide Select one overall score using the descriptors above.

5 = Command 4 = General command 3 = Basic command 2 = Limited command 1 = Minimal command

Overall Score _____ / 5

Teacher Comments

Source: NJDOE NJSLA-A and NJGPA-A Writing Rubrics, p. 15

Ma’at High School Argumentative Rubric

Classroom adaptation of NJSLA-A Grade 9 and NJGPA-A | NJSLS-ELA W.AW.9-10.1

Student _____ Date _____ Class _____

Select the single score that best describes the response across the criteria.

Criterion	Score 5	Score 4	Score 3	Score 2	Score 1
Ideas and Focus	A precise claim is set apart from an opposing position. The response uses ample, relevant textual evidence and sound reasoning to develop the claim and address counterclaims fairly.	A clear claim is generally distinguished from an opposing position. Relevant textual evidence and generally sound reasoning develop the argument, with some unevenness.	A recognizable claim and some relevant textual evidence are present. Reasoning is uneven or general, and treatment of an opposing position is partial.	A claim is attempted. Evidence is sparse or loosely related, and reasoning or treatment of the opposing position is limited.	The claim, relevant evidence, or supporting reasoning is largely unclear or missing. Opposing positions receive little attention.
Organization	The opening establishes the claim. The sequence and transitions make relationships among positions, reasons, and evidence clear. The conclusion follows from the argument.	The opening and sequence generally establish the argument. Transitions mostly clarify connections, and the conclusion generally follows.	The opening and sequence show a basic plan. Some transitions make links, and the conclusion has a general connection to the argument.	The opening, sequence, or transitions are attempted but unclear. The ending connects weakly to the argument.	An opening or recognizable sequence is largely absent. Connections are unclear and a conclusion is missing or unrelated.
Expression and Word Choice	Style, tone, and wording consistently fit the intended audience and purpose.	Style, tone, and wording usually fit the audience and purpose.	Style and tone fit the task in parts. Wording is sometimes general or uneven.	There is limited control of style, tone, or wording for the task.	Style or tone shows little awareness of the audience or purpose.

Overall Score _____ / 5

Teacher Comments

Source: NJDOE Writing Rubrics for the NJSLA-A and NJGPA-A. Classroom descriptors are paraphrased.

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Ma’at High School Conventions Rubric

Classroom adaptation of NJSLA-A Grade 9 and NJGPA-A | NJSLS-ELA L.SS.9-10.1 and L.KL.9-10.2

Student _____ Date _____ Class _____

Select the single score that best describes the response across the criteria.

Criterion	Score 5	Score 4	Score 3	Score 2	Score 1
Sentence Structure and Grammar	Consistently controls sentence structure, grammar, and the conventions of standard English.	Generally controls sentence structure and grammar. Occasional errors do not substantially affect clarity.	Shows basic control of sentence structure and grammar. Recurring errors sometimes reduce clarity.	Shows limited control of sentence structure and grammar. Frequent errors interfere with meaning.	Shows minimal control of sentence structure and grammar. Errors frequently obscure meaning.
Mechanics and Usage	Consistently applies capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and usage.	Generally applies capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and usage with occasional lapses.	Shows basic control of capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and usage, with noticeable inconsistencies.	Applies capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and usage inconsistently. Errors often distract the reader.	Shows little evidence of control over capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and usage.

Overall Score _____ / 5

Teacher Comments

Source: NJDOE Writing Rubrics for the NJSLA-A and NJGPA-A. Classroom descriptors are paraphrased.

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