

Grade 8 Informative/Explanatory Writing Standard W.8.2

Grade 8 Informative/Explanatory

W.8.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

- a. Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories; include formatting, graphics and multimedia when useful in aiding comprehension
- b. Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples
- c. Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts
- d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic
- e. Establish and maintain a formal style
- f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented

The Reading/Thinking/Writing Task

Students were given a single primary source text to read, a speech by President John Kennedy in 1963 during the height of the civil rights movement. The students read the text independently, then worked with the Focusing Question “*What perspective does Kennedy have on integration? How does the language of the text develop that perspective?*”

This is the final reading /thinking/writing task in a sequence of three, all using the same Focusing Question about perspective on integration and language. The instruction in the sequence began with highly-guided reading and writing for the first text, then moved to less-guided reading and writing for the second text. Students read and wrote about the third text independently.

This is a question that requires inferential thinking and analysis of the text. The question requires “two layers” of thinking – an understanding of Kennedy’s perspective, and an understanding of how specific language in the text creates that perspective. Students need to synthesize these two layers into a single well-focused and well-developed essay.

Focus of the Writing Task

What perspective does Kennedy have on integration? How does the language of the text develop that perspective?

The Writing Task in the Curriculum

How is it embedded in curriculum/content?

- ★ *Class: 7th / 8th grade integrated ELA / social studies curriculum*
 - focus on American history
- ★ *Curriculum unit*
 - students study three different primary source documents from the Civil Rights period
 - emphasis is on understanding that people bring varying perspectives to any historical situation, and recognizing this gives a deeper and more nuanced understanding of history. In addition, students analyze all three texts (one at a time) to recognize how the writer’s language helps develop the perspective
- ★ *Standards*
 - History (C3 Framework): D2.Hist.5.9-12 (*Note: this is a 9-12 standard, but very appropriate for middle school when paired with reading standards*)
 - Reading: RI.8.1, RI.8.4, RI.8.6, RI.8.10
 - Writing: W.8.2, W.8.9, W.8.10

How did students build the knowledge they needed?

- ★ *Texts*
 - Beals, Melba Patillo. “Integration” (excerpt from *Warriors Don’t Cry*, memoir, found in *Free At Last*, Perfection Learning, 2014)
 - Wallace, George. “Inaugural Address”. 1963 (found in *Free At Last*, Perfection Learning, 2014)
 - Kennedy, President John F. “Birmingham”, 1963 (found in *Free At Last*, Perfection Learning 2014)
- ★ *Reading and re-reading*
 - teacher led first reading / writing task (“Integration” by Melba Patillo Beals) in highly-guided instruction. Included reading aloud, multiple reads, working with teacher-created close reading, and guided note-taking and evidence-gathering.
 - Focusing Question was the same as the one students would later work with in the Kennedy piece.
 - teacher gave some guidance, but less, to the next text (“Inaugural Address” by George Wallace). Students worked in small groups to create own close reading questions, took notes and gathered evidence in partners with some guidance from teacher.
 - for this third and final task, students were given some initial vocabulary concept guidance, then worked entirely independently on both reading and writing.

What instructional approaches were used to teach writing?

- ★ *Craft lessons*
 - students had already worked with expository structures (Painted Essay® in many forms and more) including such elements as introductions, transitions and conclusions.
 - teacher gave specific instruction and practice in crafting a precise thesis statement to answer the Focusing Question.

- teacher gave specific instruction in analyzing language to support perspective.
- students were shown and worked closely with a teacher-written model about another text written about this Civil Rights period, using the same Focusing Question about perspective and language.



Writing approaches

- students were reminded of the elements that make up a strong essay in the directions. They were encouraged to reference both the model and their own earlier pieces. They then wrote and proofread independently.

What was the timeframe?

Whole unit (highly-guided, less guided, independent) took 2 -3 weeks of double periods.

Standard W.8.2
Grade 8
Proficient

Kennedy's Perspective

In 1963, as integration was progressing across the nation, President Kennedy addressed a crowd in Burlington, Alabama. He spoke his mind on what integration meant to America, and why equal treatment of all citizens was important. He spoke about why he thought that fair and just treatment of black and white people alike was vital for America. He told the audience that not only was integration necessary, it would help all Americans live better lives. This speech was only one of many that Kennedy would give on the topic of integration. President Kennedy believed that the most important belief a person can have is that everyone around them is equal. He thought that integration and the general good treatment of all citizens was important and a good step for America. He saw integration as a way to improve the lives of all Americans.

Kennedy's perspective on integration was that it was necessary and vital for all Americans to be happy. The language he used in his speech emphasized this opinion.

One situation where Kennedy uses specific language to explain his opinion was when he was addressing the founding ideals of the nation. He explained that integration was a way to keep the ideas of our founding fathers alive.

"...it was founded on the principle that all men are created equal; and that the rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened" (pg 81)

The language "all men are created equal" and "rights of every man" show that Kennedy believed in fair and just treatment of every person in America. He believed that this was one of the founding ideals of our nation. In most cases, it is important to follow the ideals of the founding fathers, and this is one example of that. Kennedy proves that he believes that all people should have this basic right. He proves it by saying that when one person is denied certain rights, the rights of all men are in danger.

A second situation in which Kennedy voices his opinion is when he talks about the fact that all students should have the right to go to any school, without having to be protected by army troops. He thinks that this shouldn't have to be necessary.

"It ought to be possible, therefore, for American students of any color to attend any public institution they select without having to be backed up by troops" (pg 81)

The language “American students” and “ any public institution” show that Kennedy believed that integration was the best choice. It shows that he was for the right of any young American to seek education. He showed that he firmly believed that integration should be a given, it should be something that is given little thought, just done. He believed that any student should have this right to be educated in the same manner as anyone else.

A third instance where Kennedy talks about integration and equal treatment is when he talks about the well-being of the nation as a whole in respect to the well-being of each individual.

“And this nation, for all its hopes and all its boasts will not be fully free until all its citizens are free” (pg 82)

The language “ all its citizens are free” shows that Kennedy thought that in order for the nation to be free, all its citizens deserved to be treated as equals. This meant integration over segregation. President Kennedy thought that the freedom of the nation depended on the freedom of every individual. That the country would not be peaceful until all of its citizens could be treated as one.

All in all, President Kennedy had a firm grasp on the concept of integration. He believed that it was the next necessary step for Americans everywhere. He believed that if the country was integrated, everyone would be able to live more harmoniously and happily. He used points like education and the founding ideals of the nation to plant this perspective in the minds of the people. He knew that he could create a better America with the help of the individuals. Ideas like this were important, because they are what created the world we live in today. Kennedy’s perspective was just one block that aided in the building of the structure of this nation.

Standard W.8.2
Grade 8
Approaching

Birmingham

Six years after the Little Rock Nine integrated Central High integration is still going on all around. Nine years after the ruling of Brown versus the Board of Education case protests are still going on and black Americans are still not fully free to live a normal life. The fourth and fifth amendments were ratified in the late 1800's and stated that any person born in the United States of America were American citizens and could not be denied the rights to life, liberty, or property. They also stated that any citizen no matter what their race or color or whether they were a slave or not, can not be denied the right to vote by any state.

On June 11, 1963, president John Fitzgerald Kennedy gave his Birmingham speech. With all the recent progress with integration Kennedy believed that it needed to be fully ended successfully and that Americans needed to keep pursuing integration and enforcing it all around. John F. Kennedy's perspective on integration is that it is essential and all Americans deserve equal rights. The text helps us see this perspective.

The first place where this perspective can be seen is at the beginning of the speech when Kennedy is talking about how the nation was founded by men of different backgrounds and different religions. He then goes on to talk about how the nation was founded on the idea that all men are created equal and the the rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened.

"It ought to be possible therefore, for American students of any color to attend any public institution they select without having to be backed up by troops." (pg. 81)

This shows his perspective because he believes that all Americans are equal whether they are black or white and they should be able to go wherever they choose for school. The language " any color" shows Kennedy's perspective because he's saying that any student should be able to go to any public school no matter what their race is.

The second place where this perspective can be clearly seen is near the end of his Birmingham speech when he's talking about how congress needs to do something about integration and that they need to enforce it so he asks Congress to help.

“I am, therefore, asking the Congress to enact legislation giving all Americans the right to be served in facilities which are open to the public – hotels, restaurants, and theaters, retail stores and similar establishments.” (pg. 83)

This shows president Kennedy’s perspective by him asking Congress to enact legislation he’s asking them to make a law making it so that it is illegal to not allow or serve black Americans in public places. The language “all Americans” shows President Kennedy’s perspective by saying that all Americans no matter what their race is can be served at a public establishment.

Overall, we can see that President John F. Kennedy had a very clear perspective on integration. He saw integration as something necessary for the United States of America to have to follow it’s own constitution in stating that all men are created equal. Kennedy’s perspective was very clearly shown and developed by the language of the text to help show the reader that he believed it was a good choice for America.

Standard W.8.2
Grade 8
Beginning

Kennedy

John Fitzgerald Kennedy was the 35 U.S. president and there was great reason for his place in the office. For instance, his views on integration, He was a pro-integration man. Wanting all men, despite their color of there skin to be equal and not live in fear of the white man. We will look at many key pieces of evidence from J.F. K’s speech, Birmingham.

The first piece of evidence from the speech is the first line, “This nation was founded by men of many nations and backgrounds, It was founded on the principle that all men are created equal; and that the rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened.” This quote summed up the whole speech and tells the audience that they are here for equality, and equality is what they will get. Because J.F.K. is willing to fight for the freedom of his people and the equality of the millions of men and women of America to be equal as one.

The second piece of evidence that we will look at is another great quote, “I am, therefore, asking the congress to enact legislation giving all Americans the right to be served in facilities which are open to the public – hotels, restaurants and theaters, retail stores and similar establishments. This seems to me to be an elementary right.” I have chosen to use this piece of evidence because of how he tells of a future where everyone is free to go into public places and not be treated as less, but as an equal. And the american people are all equal no matter what.

In conclusion John F. Kennedy was a pro-integration man with an idea that all are equal. And no one is greater just because of his skin, but they are equal because they are people. J.F.K. was one of the fue presidents that stood up and fought for his fellow americans despite what others said, because he is a leader.

Standard W.8.2
Grade 8
Exceeds

A Moral Perspective

On June 11, 1963, President John F. Kennedy gave a speech in Birmingham, Alabama. It had been 100 years since President Lincoln released the Emancipation Proclamation, yet as Kennedy was speaking, a civil rights march was going on. People were still fighting for integration, and people were still fighting against it. Earlier that year, George C. Wallace gave his inauguration speech to Alabama. The Montgomery Bus Boycott had been a success for those fighting against segregation, and it had been several years since the Little Rock Nine had integrated Central High. Despite all this, the Civil Rights Movement was still going strong, and it didn't look like it was going to end.

The book *Free At Last* contains an excerpt of Kennedy's speech. In this speech he was able to share his views on integration and suggest a solution. He talked about how he did not believe it was a sectional or partisan issue, and that it was not only a legislative issue alone. Kennedy's perspective on integration was that it was right, and the fact that some people didn't see that was a moral issue. He thought segregation was not treating everyone equally, and could only be ended by making new laws, but above all, in people's daily lives. The language of the text helps show this perspective.

One of the first places he showed this perspective was in the very beginning of his speech, when Kennedy started by saying that all men were created equal. He said, "It [this nation] was founded on the principle that all men are created equal; and that the rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened." (page 81) The language "diminished" and "threatened" showed Kennedy's perspective that all men were created equal. He thought that by threatening one man's rights, he was diminishing everyone else's. His perspective was that when someone didn't get the rights they deserve as a U.S. citizen, then all the others were not being treated how they should be because they were not equal with that man.

Another place that you can clearly see his perspective on integration was towards the end of his speech. Kennedy was talking about what type of an issue they were having with integration, and started off by saying what type of issue it was not, then what type of issue it was. He said, "We are confronted with a moral issue...the heart of the question is whether all Americans are to

be afforded equal rights and opportunities; whether we are going to treat our fellow Americans as we want to be treated.” (page 82) The language “moral issue” and “equal rights and opportunities” showed Kennedy’s perspective that disagreeing with integration was a moral issue, and that all men should be treated equally. His perspective was that the question or moral issue was that people had to treat everyone equally, as it was the morally right and correct to do. He believed that in order for this to happen, people must come to the same moral decision, that segregation was not treating everyone equally.

A last place where you can see his perspective on integration was when he started talking about how they should solve the problem. Towards the middle of his speech, Kennedy stated that people were going the wrong about ending segregation. He said, “It cannot be quieted by moves or talk. It is time to act in the Congress, in your state and local legislative body, and above all, in all of our daily lives.” (Page 82) The language “quieted by moves or talk” and “ in all of our daily lives” showed his perspective that people were going about ending segregation in the wrong way, and that it was a moral issue that had to be solved at home and in the Congress. His perspective was that people should not act rashly or without judgment, or others would get hurt or angry. He thought that only by solving the issue in their daily lives and by Congress helping, could segregation end.

Overall, Kennedy made his perspective very clear. It was that segregation was not treating all men equally, and that the only way to end it was for Congress to act, and for everyone to make the moral decision that segregation was wrong. Kennedy communicates this very clearly in the language in the text. John F. Kennedy would continue to work against segregation until he was assassinated later that year. However, even though he died, his work influenced many people to do the right thing and make the right moral decision. Through illuminating this perspective, the article helps us understand why people did what they did during the civil rights era. It helps us gain a deeper understanding of the injustice that was going on at the time, and what people did to stop it.

Standard W.8.2
Grade 8
Proficient

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Kennedy's perspective on integration was that it was necessary and vital for all Americans to be happy. The language he used in his speech emphasized this opinion.

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The language "all men are created equal" and "rights of every man" show that Kennedy believed in fair and just treatment of every person in America. He believed that this was one of the founding ideals of our nation. In most cases, it is important to follow the ideals of the founding fathers, and this is one example of that. Kennedy proves that he believes

Introduces the topic clearly: the writer gives appropriate context which summarizes the issue/topic for a reader. Some of the information is not needed here (Kennedy's views), as that will be given in the upcoming thesis statement.

The writer **previews what is to follow** by stating a main idea/focus/thesis that responds directly, appropriately, and specifically to the thinking required by the prompt, including both parts of the question.

Organizes ideas and information using categories: the writer organizes by examples of Kennedy's perspective from the text.

Develops topic with appropriate, relevant facts and concrete details in evidence from the text

Provides analysis of relevant content; uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to do so: the writer explains/analyzes the language in terms of Kennedy's perspective.

that all people should have this basic right. He proves it by saying that when one person is denied certain rights, the rights of all men are in danger.

A second situation in which Kennedy voices his opinion is when he talks about the fact that all students should have the right to go to any school, without having to be protected by army troops. He thinks that this shouldn't have to be necessary.

“It ought to be possible, therefore, for American students of any color to attend any public institution they select without having to be backed up by troops” (pg 81)

The language “American students” and “any public institution” show that Kennedy believed that integration was the best choice. It shows that he was for the right of any young American to seek education. He showed that he firmly believed that integration should be a given, it should be something that is given little thought, just done. He believed that any student should have this right to be educated in the same manner as anyone else.

A third instance where Kennedy talks about integration and equal treatment is when he talks about the well-being of the nation as a whole in respect to the well-being of each individual.

“And this nation, for all its hopes and all its boasts will not be fully free until all its citizens are free” (pg 82)

The language “ all its citizens are free” shows that Kennedy thought that in order for the nation to be free, all its citizens deserved to be treated as equals. This meant integration over segregation. President Kennedy thought that the freedom of the nation depended on the freedom of every individual. That the country would not be peaceful until all of its citizens could be treated as one.

All in all, President Kennedy had a firm grasp on the concept of integration. He believed that it was the next necessary step for Americans everywhere. He believed that if the country was integrated, everyone

Uses appropriate transitions to clarify relationships among ideas and concepts: the writer connects ideas both between and within paragraphs.

Establishes and maintains a formal style

Provides a concluding section that follows from and supports the information presented

would be able to live more harmoniously and happily. He used points like education and the founding ideals of the nation to plant this perspective in the minds of the people. He knew that he could create a better America with the help of the individuals. Ideas like this were important, because they are what created the world we live in today. Kennedy's perspective was just one block that aided in the building of the structure of this nation.

The writer reflects on the significance of the topic/focus of the essay, Kennedy's perspective on integration (above grade level).

Final Thoughts
(Gr 8 Informative: Proficient)

Overall, this essay shows solid understanding of the topic, the perspective that President Kennedy has on integration as shown in this speech in Birmingham. The writer responds to the prompt (*“What is Kennedy’s perspective on integration, and how does the language of the text develop that perspective?”*) with a clear and specific focus/thesis statement. Throughout the essay, the writer sticks consistently to that focus, supplying evidence from the text.

In addition, the writer analyzes the evidence at an appropriate 8th grade level, in terms of how the language develops Kennedy's perspective. All of this thinking is done within a clear structure, including clear (though basic) transitions, that makes the thinking well-connected and easy for the reader to follow. She concludes by reflecting appropriately on the significance of the topic of Kennedy's perspective on integration.

A Word About Language and Conventions
(Gr 8 Informative: Proficient)

Although there are some errors, the writer shows *overall control* over grade-level language and conventions.

Standard W.8.2
Grade 8
Approaching

Birmingham

Six years after the Little Rock Nine integrated Central High integration is still going on all around. Nine years after the ruling of Brown versus the Board of Education case protests are still going on and black Americans are still not fully free to live a normal life. The fourth and fifth amendments were ratified in the late 1800's and stated that any person born in the United States of America were American citizens and could not be denied the rights to life, liberty, or property. They also stated that any citizen no matter what their race or color or whether they were a slave or not, can not be denied the right to vote by any state.

On June 11, 1963, president John Fitzgerald Kennedy gave his Birmingham speech. With all the recent progress with integration Kennedy believed that it needed to be fully ended successfully and that Americans needed to keep pursuing integration and enforcing it all around. John F. Kennedy's perspective on integration is that it is essential and all Americans deserve equal rights. The text helps us see this perspective.

The first place where this perspective can be seen is at the beginning of the speech when Kennedy is talking about how the nation was founded by men of different backgrounds and different religions. He then goes on to talk about how the nation was founded on the idea that all men are created equal and the rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened.

“It ought to be possible therefore, for American students of any color to attend any public institution they select without having to be backed up by troops.” (pg. 81)

This shows his perspective because he believes that all Americans are equal whether they are black or white and they should be

Introduces the topic: the writer gives some appropriate context which summarizes the issue/topic for a reader. However, the writer also gives some detail (about the amendments) that, while accurate, is not needed for summary-level understanding and distracts the reader, at least the way the writer presents it.

The writer **previews what is to follow** by stating a main idea/focus that responds to the prompt. He addresses both parts of the prompt question.

Organizes ideas and information using categories: the writer organizes by examples of Kennedy's perspective from the text.

Uses some appropriate transitions to clarify relationships among ideas and concepts: the writer connects some ideas both between and within paragraphs, but clearer transitions (to the evidence, for example) would make the essay easier to follow.

able to go wherever they choose for school. The language “any color” shows Kennedy’s perspective because he’s saying that any student should be able to go to any public school no matter what their race is.

Develops topic with appropriate, relevant facts and concrete details in evidence from the text

The second place where this perspective can be clearly seen is near the end of his Birmingham speech when he’s talking about how congress needs to do something about integration and that they need to enforce it so he asks Congress to help.

“I am, therefore, asking the Congress to enact legislation giving all Americans the right to be served in facilities which are open to the public – hotels, restaurants, and theaters, retail stores and similar establishments.” (pg. 83)

Attempts to **provide analysis of relevant content** and **use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary**: the writer tries to analyze the evidence in terms of Kennedy’s perspective. However, the writer is really paraphrasing the evidence, rather than analyzing it.

This shows president Kennedy’s perspective by him asking Congress to enact legislation he’s asking them to make a law making it so that it is illegal to not allow or serve black Americans in public places. The language “all Americans” shows President Kennedy’s perspective by saying that all Americans no matter what their race is can be served at a public establishment.

Overall, we can see that President John F. Kennedy had a very clear perspective on integration. He saw integration as something necessary for the United States of America to have to follow it’s own constitution in stating that all men are created equal. Kennedy’s perspective was very clearly shown and developed by the language of the text to help show the reader that he believed it was a good choice for America.

Provides a concluding section that follows from and supports the information presented

Final Thoughts
(Gr 8 Informative: Approaching)

Overall, this piece shows understanding of the general topic and focus, the perspective that President Kennedy had on integration and how the language of the text supports that focus. The writer responds with a specific thesis statement (*integration is essential and all Americans deserve equal rights*) and the idea that the language supports that perspective. Structurally, the essay is clear: the writer has an introduction, thesis/focus statement, accurate and appropriate evidence from the text, and a conclusion.

The writer does attempt to analyze how the language of the text supports Kennedy's perspective. However, he seems to fall back on paraphrasing the evidence, rather than analyzing it.

The writer would benefit from some targeted instruction and practice with analysis, and how it differs from paraphrasing.

A Word About Language and Conventions
(Gr 8 Informative: Approaching)

Although there are some errors, the writer shows *overall control* over grade-level language and conventions.

Standard W.8.2
Grade 8
Beginning

Kennedy

John Fitzgerald Kennedy was the 35 U.S. president and there was great reason for his place in the office. For instance, his views on integration, He was a pro-integration man. Wanting all men, despite their color of there skin to be equal and not live in fear of the white man. We will look at many key pieces of evidence from J.F. K’s speech, Birmingham.

The first piece of evidence from the speech is the first line, “This nation was founded by men of many nations and backgrounds, It was founded on the principle that all men are created equal; and that the rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened.” This quote summed up the whole speech and tells the audience that they are here for equality, and equality is what they will get. Because J.F.K. is willing to fight for the freedom of his people and the equality of the millions of men and women of America to be equal as one.

The second piece of evidence that we will look at is another great quote, “I am, therefore, asking the congress to enact legislation giving all Americans the right to be served in facilities which are open to the public – hotels, restaurants and theaters, retail stores and similar establishments. This seems to me to be an elementary right.” I have chosen to use this piece of evidence because of how he tells of a future where everyone is free to go into public places and not be treated as less, but as an equal. And the american people are all equal no matter what.

Introduces the topic:
the writer gives some appropriate context which summarizes the issue/topic for a reader. However, the context is minimal.

The writer attempts to **preview what is to follow** by stating a main idea/focus that responds to the prompt about Kennedy’s perspective on integration. However, that focus/thesis, while accurate, is very general, while a more specific statement would be stronger.

Organizes ideas and information by evidence

Attempts to **develop topic with appropriate, relevant facts and concrete details** from the text: the writer attempts to explain the evidence, but does not **analyze** the language Kennedy uses to develop his perspective, as asked for in the prompt.

Attempts to **establish and maintain a** reasonably **formal style**

In conclusion John F. Kennedy was a pro-integration man with an idea that all are equal. And no one is greater just because of his skin, but they are equal because they are people. J.F.K. was one of the few presidents that stood up and fought for his fellow americans despite what others said, because he is a leader.

Provides a concluding section that follows from and supports the information presented: in addition, writer attempts to reflect on the topic, though with an unsubstantiated statement.

Final Thoughts
(Gr 8 Informative: Beginning)

Overall, this piece shows some understanding of the general topic, President Kennedy’s perspective on integration in this speech. However, the writer gives a very general focus / thesis (*he was a pro-integration man*) and does not address the second part of the prompt about how the language in the text develops the perspective.

The essay does show some strength. Structurally, for example, the essay is clear: the writer has an introduction, attempted thesis/focus statement, evidence from the text, and a conclusion. In addition, the writer sticks to the focus throughout the essay, and attempts to use a formal academic style. However, the vagueness of focus, and the lack of analysis of the language, affects the proficiency of the entire essay.

The writer could benefit from conferring about a more precise thesis statement, as well as discussing how the language of the text helps develop the perspective.

A Word About Language and Conventions
(Gr 8 Informative: Beginning)

Partial Control of Conventions: Although the writer has some control over language and conventions, the student could benefit from instruction in the following skills:

- sentence fragments and structure
- consistent verb tense
- capitalization

Standard W.8.2
Grade 8
Exceeds

A Moral Perspective

On June 11, 1963, President John F. Kennedy gave a speech in Birmingham, Alabama. It had been 100 years since President Lincoln released the Emancipation Proclamation, yet as Kennedy was speaking, a civil rights march was going on. People were still fighting for integration, and people were still fighting against it. Earlier that year, George C. Wallace gave his inauguration speech to Alabama. The Montgomery Bus Boycott had been a success for those fighting against segregation, and it had been several years since the Little Rock Nine had integrated Central High. Despite all this, the Civil Rights Movement was still going strong, and it didn't look like it was going to end.

The book *Free At Last* contains an excerpt of Kennedy's speech. In this speech he was able to share his views on integration and suggest a solution. He talked about how he did not believe it was a sectional or partisan issue, and that it was not only a legislative issue alone. Kennedy's perspective on integration was that it was right, and the fact that some people didn't see that was a moral issue. He thought segregation was not treating everyone equally, and could only be ended by making new laws, but above all, in people's daily lives. The language of the text helps show this perspective.

One of the first places he showed this perspective was in the very beginning of his speech, when Kennedy started by saying that all men were created equal. He said, "It [this nation] was founded on the principle that all men are created equal; and that the rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened."(page 81) The language "diminished" and "threatened" showed Kennedy's perspective that all men were created equal. He thought that by threatening one man's rights, he was diminishing everyone else's. His perspective was that when

Introduces the topic clearly: the writer gives rich historical context as background. The writer then goes on to give more targeted context that provides summary level understanding of the text/topic for a reader.

The writer **previews what is to follow** by stating a thesis/focus that responds directly, specifically, and insightfully (moral issue) to the thinking required by the prompt, including addressing the question about language.

Organizes ideas and information using categories: the writer organizes by examples of Kennedy's perspective from the text. These are in chronological order from the text.

someone didn't get the rights they deserve as a U.S. citizen, then all the others were not being treated how they should be because they were not equal with that man.

Another place that you can clearly see his perspective on integration was towards the end of his speech. Kennedy was talking about what type of an issue they were having with integration, and started off by saying what type of issue it was not, then what type of issue it was. He said, "We are confronted with a moral issue...the heart of the question is whether all Americans are to be afforded equal rights and opportunities; whether we are going to treat our fellow Americans as we want to be treated." (page 82) The language "moral issue" and "equal rights and opportunities" showed Kennedy's perspective that disagreeing with integration was a moral issue, and that all men should be treated equally. His perspective was that the question or moral issue was that people had to treat everyone equally, as it was the morally right and correct to do. He believed that in order for this to happen, people must come to the same moral decision, that segregation was not treating everyone equally.

A last place where you can see his perspective on integration was when he started talking about how they should solve the problem. Towards the middle of his speech, Kennedy stated that people were going the wrong about ending segregation. He said, "It cannot be quieted by moves or talk. It is time to act in the Congress, in your state and local legislative body, and above all, in all of our daily lives." (Page 82) The language "quieted by moves or talk" and "in all of our daily lives" showed his perspective that people were going about ending segregation in the wrong way, and that it was a moral issue that had to be solved at home and in the Congress. His perspective was that people should not act rashly or without judgment, or others would get hurt or angry. He thought that only by solving the issue in their daily lives and by Congress helping, could segregation end.

Develops topic with appropriate, relevant facts and concrete details in evidence from the text

Provides analysis of relevant content; uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary: the writer explains/analyzes the language in terms of Kennedy's perspective.

Establishes and maintains a formal style

Uses appropriate transitions to clarify relationships among ideas and concepts: the writer connects ideas both between and within paragraphs.

Here the writer departs from the chronological pattern of evidence, but it is intentional – the writer is discussing the solutions that Kennedy is proposing to this "moral issue" of ending segregation.

Overall, Kennedy made his perspective very clear. It was that segregation was not treating all men equally, and that the only way to end it was for Congress to act, and for everyone to make the moral decision that segregation was wrong. Kennedy communicates this very clearly in the language in the text. John F. Kennedy would continue to work against segregation until he was assassinated later that year. However, even though he died, his work influenced many people to do the right thing and make the right moral decision. Through illuminating this perspective, the article helps us understand why people did what they did during the civil rights era. It helps us gain a deeper understanding of the injustice that was going on at the time, and what people did to stop it.

Provides a concluding section that follows from and supports the information presented

The writer reflects on the significance of the topic/focus of the essay, Kennedy's perspective on integration (above grade level). She goes further by reflecting on the importance of understanding perspective (the history standard here). Both of these are above grade level.

Final Thoughts
(Gr 8 Informative: Exceeds)

Overall, this essay exceeds proficiency for eighth grade. The writer shows solid understanding of the topic, the perspective that President Kennedy has on integration as shown in this speech in Birmingham. The writer responds to the prompt (“*What is Kennedy’s perspective on integration, and how does the language of the text develop that perspective?*”) with a clear, and specific focus/thesis statement. Throughout the essay, the writer sticks consistently to that focus, supplying evidence from the text. The writer analyzes the language of the evidence at an appropriate 8th grade level, in terms of how the language develops Kennedy’s perspective. All of this thinking is done within a clear structure, including clear (though basic) transitions, that makes the thinking well-connected and easy for the reader to follow.

In addition, the essay exceeds the standard in several ways. First, the introduction grounds the essay in a broad historical context, which is particularly helpful for the reader. The focus/thesis statement is not only specific but also insightful (the “moral issue”). The writer concludes by reflecting appropriately on the significance of the topic of Kennedy’s perspective on integration, and even goes further, reflecting a bit on the importance of understanding perspective as a way of understanding the historical time period.

A Word About Language and Conventions
(Gr 8 Informative: Exceeds)

Although there are some errors, the writer shows *overall control* over grade-level language and conventions.