

Rubrics and exemplars: Grade 8

Focus Rubric

Focus Definition: To select and thoroughly develop one specific moment, idea, or claim.

4 EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS

Student writes a minimum of 140 words AND almost all sentences develop the same moment, idea, or claim.

3 PROFICIENT

Student writes a minimum of 105 words AND most sentences develop the same moment, idea, or claim.

2 DEVELOPING PROFICIENCY

Student writes a minimum of 50 words AND some sentences develop the same moment, idea, or claim.

1 NO PROGRESS TOWARD PROFICIENCY

Student writes a minimum of 25 words AND almost none of the sentences develop the same moment, idea, or claim.

Note: Scores for Focus are affected by the number of words in a student's response. To adequately demonstrate proficiency, a student must provide enough writing to show they can maintain this skill consistently across multiple sentences.

Focus Exemplars

The Focus rubric targets a student's ability to thoroughly develop one moment, idea, or claim. In the annotations included here, we distinguish between text details and explanatory sentences to demonstrate how students can use these elements to develop a moment, idea, or claim.

Writing Prompt: What is one important difference between how Amy Tan felt about the Christmas Eve dinner as a teenager and how she feels about it as an adult? Develop your idea with evidence from the text that supports your thinking.

Focus score of 1

1 NO PROGRESS TOWARD PROFICIENCY

Student writes a minimum of 25 words AND almost none of the sentences develop the same moment, idea, or claim.

She does not like Robert trying the Chinese food because she thinks it will make him not like her. I love going out to eat and ordering as many different kinds of food as my mom will let me. My brother likes snails. Yuck.

- The student does not include a clear or specific idea.
 - The student includes a vague reference to a text detail but does not develop the idea.
 - The student writes sentences that are off-topic or do not develop the idea.
 - The student writes 44 words and can score a 1 in Focus.
 - The student receives a score of 1 because the sentences do not develop a single idea.
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Focus score of 2

2 DEVELOPING PROFICIENCY

Student writes a minimum of 50 words AND some sentences develop the same moment, idea, or claim.

Amy Tan felt really disgusted as a teen. because she did not think the american family was gonna like it because there used to turkey ham and stuff like that but when she got older she realized that her mom was trying to help her understand that the food was good and not all cultures eat the same and her mom wanted to cook her favorite food because she wanted her to feel comfortable and eat good. The skirt was symbolic because she wanted her to be herself but she would always be chinese.

- The student states a clear or specific idea.
 - The student includes text details that develop the idea.
 - The student explains how the text details develop the idea.
 - The student writes sentences that are off-topic or that do not develop the idea.
 - The student writes 94 words and can score a 1 or 2 in Focus.
 - The student receives a score of 2 because some of the sentences develop the idea.
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Focus score of 3

3 PROFICIENT

Student writes a minimum of 105 words AND most sentences develop the same precise moment, idea, or claim.

As a teenager, she was embarrassed by both her family and her Chinese culture. She used sentences like "I wanted to disappear" and "I was stunned into silence for the rest of the night," which highlights that her family's behavior is making her feel really embarrassed. I don't think Robert is worth it. As an adult, she was at peace with her Chinese culture and appreciates what her mom did. In the text, it states "I was able to fully appreciate her lesson" and "she had chosen all my favorite foods." This shows that she appreciated what her mother did and that she is at peace with her Chinese heritage.

- The student states a clear and specific idea.
 - The student includes text details that develop the idea.
 - The student writes sentences that explain how the text details develop the idea.
 - The student includes sentences that do not directly develop the idea.
 - The student writes 112 words and can score a 1, 2, or 3 in Focus.
 - The student receives a score of 3 because most of the sentences develop the idea.
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Focus score of 4

4 EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS

Student writes a minimum of 140 words AND almost all sentences develop the same moment, idea, or claim.

Amy's emotions and thinking were drastically different from when she was a teenager and she was embarrassed to when she became an adult and was proud. During that night before Christmas, Amy's mind was focused on Robert and the minister's family's feelings. She questioned her family's culture: "What terrible disappointment would he feel upon seeing not a roasted turkey and sweet potatoes but Chinese food" (Tan). By worrying about how the minister's family would feel about their meal, she skipped over the reasons why her family might have invited them in the first place: to help them see the differences in culture and the good relations between Chinese and American people. Amy only saw disappointment in Robert and the things that his family was leaving behind instead of the experiences that they were going to gain. After Amy grows up, she recognizes her mother's remarks about culture and the importance of pride during shared holidays. In Amy's mature mind, she sees herself and her family as a representative of Chinese culture and traditions, and that it is her job to "be proud you are different. Your only shame is to have shame." This story represents an even bigger way that children change as they grow up and can recognize implicit and explicit messages through action and speech.

- The student states and restates a clear and specific idea.
- The student includes text details that develop the idea.
- The student writes additional sentences that develop the idea.
- The student writes 217 words and can score a 1, 2, 3, or 4 in Focus.
- The student receives a score of 4 because all of the sentences develop the idea.

Use of Evidence Rubric

Use of Evidence Definition: To select and describe quoted or paraphrased details from a text to develop and support an idea or claim.

4 EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS

Student writes a minimum of 140 words AND includes strong evidence in their response. Student describes the key parts of that evidence and shows how the evidence supports their idea or claim.

3 PROFICIENT

Student writes a minimum of 105 words AND includes strong evidence in their response. Student describes most of the key parts of that evidence and shows how the evidence supports their idea or claim.

2 DEVELOPING PROFICIENCY

Student writes a minimum of 50 words AND includes some evidence in their response. Student describes some parts of that evidence and shows how the evidence supports their idea or claim.

1 NO PROGRESS TOWARD PROFICIENCY

Student writes a minimum of 25 words AND includes almost no evidence in their response. Student does not describe parts of that evidence and does not show how the evidence supports their idea or claim.

Note: Scores for Use of Evidence are affected by the number of words in a student's response. To adequately demonstrate proficiency, a student must provide enough writing to show they can maintain this skill consistently across multiple sentences.

Use of Evidence Exemplars

Writing Prompt: What is one important difference between how Amy Tan felt about the Christmas Eve dinner as a teenager and how she feels about it as an adult? Develop your idea with evidence from the text that supports your thinking.

Use of Evidence score of 1

1 NO PROGRESS TOWARD PROFICIENCY

Student writes a minimum of 25 words AND includes almost no evidence in their response. Student does not describe parts of that evidence and does not show how the evidence supports their idea or claim.

As a teenager she was embarrassed. She says "my father leaned back and belched loudly." As an adult she was proud. She says, "For Christmas Eve that year, she had chosen all my favorite foods."

- The student states a clear and specific idea.
- The student includes textual evidence in the form of 2 quotations, but the student does not describe how either piece of evidence connects to the idea.
- The student writes 35 words and can score a 1 in Use of Evidence.
- The student receives a score of 1 because they do not describe how parts or elements of their textual evidence connect to the idea.

Use of Evidence score of 2

2 DEVELOPING PROFICIENCY

Student writes a minimum of 50 words AND includes some evidence in their response. Student describes some parts of that evidence and shows how the evidence supports their idea or claim.

As a teenager, Amy viewed things very differently. She was embarrassed by her family. We can see this when she said, "When I found out that my parents had invited the minister's family over for Christmas Eve dinner, I cried. What would Robert think of our shabby Chinese Christmas?" In this sentence we can see that she was worried about what Robert would think about her family and her culture and how differently they celebrate Christmas due to having a different nationality. Amy is different as an adult. She says, "I was able to fully appreciate her lesson and the true purpose behind our particular menu."

- The student states a clear and specific idea.
- The student provides 2 quotations as textual evidence.
- The student includes a description of how one of their quotes connects to the idea but does not do the same for the second quote.
- The student writes 107 words and can score a 1, 2, or 3 in Use of Evidence.
- The student receives a score of 2 because they include some textual evidence and the student describes how some parts or elements connect to the idea.

Use of Evidence score of 3

3 PROFICIENT

Student writes a minimum of 105 words AND includes strong evidence in their response. Student describes most of the key parts of that evidence and shows how the evidence supports their idea or claim.

As a teenager, she felt embarrassed of her culture and did not like it because she thought other people thought it was strange, but as an adult she felt proud. Before the dinner, she wondered, "What would Robert think of our shabby Chinese Christmas?" Using the words "shabby" and "Chinese," she shows that she thinks her family's dinner is something to be embarrassed of. At dinner, her shame gets worse with her "noisy Chinese relatives who lacked proper American manners" and the food, which was not "a roasted turkey and sweet potatoes but Chinese food." She even describes the kitchen as "littered with appalling mounds of raw food." Her words show her disgust and embarrassment about what Robert thinks. As an adult Amy says "It wasn't until many years later... that I was able to appreciate her lesson and the true purpose behind our particular menu."

- The student states a clear and specific idea.
- The student includes 5 quotations as textual evidence.
- The student describes how some pieces of textual evidence connect to the idea, including the impact of specific word choices.
- The student writes 147 words and can score a 1, 2, 3, or 4 in Use of Evidence.
- The student receives a score of 3 because they include textual evidence and describe how most pieces of evidence connect to the idea, but the student does not fully develop these descriptions.

Use of Evidence score of 4

4 EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS

Student writes a minimum of 140 words AND includes strong evidence in their response. Student describes the key parts of that evidence and shows how the evidence supports their idea or claim.

As a teenager Amy felt very embarrassed about her family's Christmas Eve dinner, while as an adult she realized that she was proud of her heritage. After the minister's family was invited to Christmas Eve dinner, Amy cried because she was scared and upset. Amy was scared of what Robert and his family would think of their "shabby Chinese Christmas." When Robert's family arrived for dinner, Amy was embarrassed by all the food. She described the food as "littered," "appalling," "slimy," and "bulging," choosing words to highlight how offensive she thinks the food is. Then Amy is embarrassed by her relatives who are very rude and have no manners in contrast to Robert's family. At the table, Amy says, "I wanted to disappear" because she was so worried Robert wouldn't like her. When she is older, Amy realizes that her mother was trying to teach her a lesson. Her mother tells her, "inside you must always be Chinese. You must be proud you are different." As an adult, Amy understands the importance of her mom's lesson and realizes that she should celebrate and be proud of her heritage by eating her "favorite foods."

- The student states a clear and specific idea.
- The student includes paraphrases and multiple quotations as textual evidence.
- The student thoroughly describes how elements of the textual evidence are connected to the idea, including the impact of specific word choices.
- The student writes 194 words and can score a 1, 2, 3, or 4 in Use of Evidence.
- The student receives a score of 4 because they include textual evidence and fully describe how the parts or elements connect to the idea, including the importance of individual words and phrases.