

Assessment Guide

ASSESSMENT GUIDE FOR ARGUMENTATION/ANALYTICAL WRITING					
	Not in Evidence	Some Evidence of Competency	Approaching Competency	Competent	Exceeds Competency
Response to Essay Topic: The writer responds effectively to the writing task. The writer demonstrates that he or she can develop his or her own ideas in response to readings, research, observations, and lessons learned.					
Understanding & Use of Text: The writer provides the reader a clear and accurate understanding of the readings, research, and observation, and effectively uses the ideas from them to develop the writer's response.					
Development: The writer develops the essay effectively by analyzing well-chosen examples from experience, observation, reading, or learning in ways that make his or her perspective compelling.					
Organization: The writer organizes the essay effectively, establishes a focus, and guides the reader through a coherent, well-ordered presentation of his or her ideas. It is clear how each new paragraph advances the writer's response to the essay topic.					
Word Choice & Sentence Structure: The writer uses a wide variety of sentences in ways that help convey and reinforce his or her ideas and chooses words that convey his or her ideas clearly and precisely.					
Grammar, Usage, & Conventions: The writer makes sophisticated use of grammatical relationships and punctuation to support the effective communication of his or her ideas.					

The teacher may use all or part of the assessment guide to evaluate student writing. The categories and descriptions that make up this assessment guide are adapted from the Analytical Writing Improvement Continuum (AWIC) developed by high school, community college, and university teachers of writing who are Teacher Consultants with the California Writing Project. The scoring guide in these modules is just a slice of the AWIC and gives a glimpse into this improvement assessment tool that is organized by 18 essential attributes of analytical writing and uses no deficit language. Contact the California Writing Project for more information about the ISAW assessment tools and the ways they support preparing students for college- and career-readiness.

Student Sample C

The third student reflects on and analyzes her summer experience and learning as a student ranger at Mono Lake. The reader is guided through the geography and political history of it as she builds an argument for the preservation of Mono Lake. More than a response to a topic that asked her to address misperceptions about a community and its people, she developed an essay that draws on aspects of a feature article to argue and call the readers to act.

The Battle for Mono Lake

Dark clouds smother the sky, threatening rain as I walk along the lakeshore. Thunderheads have imposed their presence here the entire week, and give no sign of taking their leave. Lightning cracks open the nearby mountain crest as I head back towards the car. I knew my last day at Mono Lake wouldn't bring me the sun-drenched weather that so many flock to California for. I didn't care—just being in this place was enough for me. It was my last taste of the magic of Highway 395, of the lonely high desert and its solid mountain enclosures—there is nowhere in California, or the world, like it. Tucked away in California are these mountains and deserts, in forgotten valleys, distant forests, and hidden canyons where an untamed spirit and grandeur remain. Seagulls catch the updraft above the blackened, choppy waters. Humanity fades away, and nature comes into focus. A place where time ends and life begins—a primordial sea: brine shrimp, alkali flies, and tufa towers that pools in the sagebrush bowl below the backdoor of Yosemite. Even the air smells pure and clean here. Earth and sage, salt and water all mix and cleanse the soul's palette. I ease my way between the guard posts of white and chalky tufa towers, memorials to an enduring battle: the war to save Mono Lake. A place of great struggles and raw beauty, the lake is a reflection of both prehistoric past and modern efforts to keep it alive. The fight between two great forces of California—the water-thirsty beast of Los Angeles, and the group of grassroots citizens that banded together to stop the destruction of one of the last great places of the region, culminated at this lonely place. Mono Lake is the spirit of California, a place rich in beauty that can so easily be destroyed.

High school geography textbooks tell us that on the leeward side of a mountain range there is a rain shadow—an arid region beyond the mountains where precipitation is scarce. I contemplate this information as I turn away from the wind. Gusts sweep over the lake, creating miniature-breaking waves. The saline brine churns salt molecules into the atmosphere and disperses them. I close my eyes and suddenly it is no longer Mono Lake—it's the sea, and I'm breathing in the soggy, salty air of the Pacific. I open my eyes again. The ocean has given way to the shrinking inland sea of Mono, and the heavens pour down on me. I remember that geography textbook again, and how your experiences can be so different from what you read. A book can say that Mono Lake is just a barren wasteland, but the people who have actually explored the basin know better. I run back to the car, realizing I left my jacket there. As I move up to the parking lot, I notice the markers that the people of the Tufa Reserve placed, carefully noting the water levels of years past. Mono Lake was not so salty, not so shallow once. The creeks that once flowed into it were rich in life, fragile ecosystems that were carelessly destroyed by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, diverted to feed its own needs instead of Mono Lake.

As you drive down Highway 395 through the Owens Valley on a windy day, you can taste the bitter, biting wind as it stings your eyes and mouth—the product of LA's parched mouth, emanating from a dried up playa. Once blue like Mono, it is the now deceased Owens Lake: a dry bed that is no longer a source of life, but a creator of stinging alkali dust storms. The only place these acrid storms do not penetrate is in your enclosed car. But in the metropolis' growing thirst for water, the Owens River and its Lake were no longer enough to satisfy its ever-lengthening drinking straw. The DWP gradually stretched its arm farther north, until it seized the Mono Basin. Slowly it began to choke its creeks—the very arteries it needed to survive, its green and blue veins of life died away. And the lake shrank.

But there were people who knew better. The effects that were beginning to show on the lake shocked them. When the shore drew back, it exposed a land bridge to an important nesting area, leaving thousands of migratory birds, who had made their home on the

islands of Negit and Paoha for ages, exposed to predation and death from coyotes. A man named David Gaines formed the Mono Lake Committee, a group of brave souls who stood up for a wild land that could not. They worked to make sure that Los Angeles should never be allowed to do such a thing again. With the efforts of the Committee and others, the Lake could now fight back. Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area formed, and the restoration of the lake began. Slowly, the green and blue hues of life once again returned to Rush Creek and the other tributaries that end their journeys at the lake. Mono reclaimed the land connecting the islands. Although progress has been made, it will be many long years before Mono will return to its original capacity. No longer does Los Angeles take its water mercilessly and heedlessly, and now acts with a much more responsible hand to the land. Mono Lake won its first battle, yet there are—and unfortunately will be—many others. The latest is a proposed subdivision within its boundaries of the Scenic Area, now threatening the environmental integrity and raw beauty of the basin. The proposal would line Mono's western shore with a group of tract homes. The committee continues to fight its progress with grassroots supporters. Only time will tell whether their endeavor will be triumphant over the encroaching development that still threatens Mono Lake.

Turning onto the highway now, I drive back to Lee Vining, but slowly, with the highest setting on my windshield wipers as a deluge of precipitation pounds down on my car. Eventually, I pull off of the road altogether and wait for the cloudburst to pass. Slowly, the rain passes, moving to the south. I am able to see the crest of the Sierra again, veiled at the top with the white gauze of falling snow. Driving to the very foot of these mountains, I enter the hamlet of Lee Vining, home of the Mono Lake Committee. The doors are open for the day, welcoming many others and me. We marvel at the accounts and artifacts of the Battle of Mono Lake. Photographs, exhibits, and maps all chart the progress of the lake as it gradually regains health. The committee headquarters is the fort that protects Mono Lake, and people who share a love for this area are its soldiers—the ones who help keep the lake alive, the people who care, who take action. When you first visit the committee, you can see people who are marveling at Mono for the first time. When I went to Lee Vining, I did not just see solitary people at the visitor's center. I saw families, friends on vacation, people from Los Angeles and elsewhere, all learning and sharing their newly-found knowledge about Mono Lake, becoming excited and inspired to help save the lake. They are part of a spirit of optimism in California, one that believes to change things for the better, the power lies in the hands of the people. A dream that believes you can solve any problem if you care enough about it. However, these optimistic people must have caution.

Not everyone knows the power and history behind Mono Lake, nor do they bother to find out. Everyone does not share the fight of those who care for the lake. Some people wish to develop the land surrounding Mono, and want to build a vacation home there, or create more real estate. Others do not care at all, because they have not taken the time to explore the lake, or even travel outside their own sprawling city or suburb. For every few people who stop there, a few hundred drive by, on their way to Yosemite, Reno, or other places along 395. Those few hundred will never support efforts to save the lake. But, for the committee and the people who care, all they can do is hope that the ones who do stop on their way elsewhere will have been inspired by the efforts to keep Mono Lake alive. For, with any luck, the people who do take time to stop will be the ones to help save the last pockets of wild California, which even as I write, the new subdivision or vacation home developments draw closer to.

Annotation – Student Sample C

Student Work	What do you see in the student work?	How does it connect to your assessment tools?	What will you work on next with this student?
<p>The Battle for Mono Lake</p> <p>Dark clouds smother the sky, threatening rain as I walk along the lakeshore. Thunderheads have imposed their presence here the entire week, and give no sign of taking their leave. Lightning cracks open the nearby mountain crest as I head back towards the car. I knew my last day at Mono Lake wouldn't bring me the sun-drenched weather that so many flock to California for. I didn't care—just being in this place was enough for me. It was my last taste of the magic of Highway 395, of the lonely high desert and its solid mountain enclosures—there is nowhere in California, or the world, like it. Tucked away in California are these mountains and deserts, in forgotten valleys, distant forests, and hidden canyons where an untamed spirit and grandeur remain. Seagulls catch the updraft above the blackened, choppy waters. Humanity fades away, and nature comes into focus. A place where time ends and life begins—a primordial sea: brine shrimp, alkali flies, and tufa towers that pools in the sagebrush bowl below the backdoor of Yosemite. Even the air smells pure and clean here. Earth and sage, salt and water all mix and cleanse the soul's palette. I ease my way between the guard posts of white and chalky tufa towers, memorials to an enduring battle: the war to save Mono Lake. A place of great struggles and raw beauty, the lake is a reflection of both prehistoric past and modern efforts to keep it alive. The fight between two great forces of California—the water-thirsty beast of Los Angeles, and the group of grassroots citizens that banded together to stop the destruction of one of the last great places of the region, culminated at this lonely place. Mono Lake is the spirit of California, a place rich in beauty that can so easily be destroyed.</p> <p>High school geography textbooks tell us that on the leeward side of a mountain range there is a rain shadow—an arid region beyond the mountains where precipitation is scarce. I contemplate this information as I turn away from the wind. Gusts sweep over the lake, creating miniature-breaking waves. The saline brine churns salt molecules into the atmosphere and disperses them. I close my eyes and suddenly it is no longer Mono Lake—it's the sea, and I'm breathing in the soggy, salty air of</p>	<p>Student uses reflection to lead to a political viewpoint and claim.</p> <p>Commanding use of rhetorical strategies to achieve an argumentative purpose.</p> <p>Intriguing title</p> <p>Vivid description incorporating all of our senses.</p> <p>Connection to significance on observations</p> <p>Geographical details are sprinkled with pointed commentary, "forgotten valleys" that signals that the writer is making an argument.</p> <p>Back to the present.</p> <p>Introduction of political tension.</p> <p>Reflection of the political climate.</p> <p>Move to another example.</p>	<p>Writing observations to reflection to persuasion brings significance to the reader.</p> <p>Language choices impact tone.</p> <p>Reader is immediately captured.</p> <p>Reflection is woven in from the beginning.</p>	<p>For the WHOLE class: Continued study of rhetorical structures. Review the importance of observation and learning as evidence. Review the importance of well-chosen examples, precise diction, and interesting syntax. This paper will serve as a model for balanced writing, carefully crafted details, precise diction, and varied syntax. The following "What will you work on..." is what the whole class can learn from this essay used as a model.</p> <p>Tone</p> <p>Use of present tense</p> <p>Imagery</p> <p>Transition to a personal example then moves to a personal insight, then to a larger context.</p>

<p>the Pacific. I open my eyes again. The ocean has given way to the shrinking inland sea of Mono, and the heavens pour down on me. I remember that geography textbook again, and how your experiences can be so different from what you read. A book can say that Mono Lake is just a barren wasteland, but the people who have actually explored the basin know better. I run back to the car, realizing I left my jacket there. As I move up to the parking lot, I notice the markers that the people of the Tufa Reserve placed, carefully noting the water levels of years past. Mono Lake was not so salty, not so shallow once. The creeks that once flowed into it were rich in life, fragile ecosystems that were carelessly destroyed by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, diverted to feed its own needs instead of Mono Lake.</p> <p>As you drive down Highway 395 through the Owens Valley on a windy day, you can taste the bitter, biting wind as it stings your eyes and mouth—the product of LA’s parched mouth, emanating from a dried up playa. Once blue like Mono, it is the now deceased Owens Lake: a dry bed that is no longer a source of life, but a creator of stinging alkali dust storms. The only place these acrid storms do not penetrate is in your enclosed car. But in the metropolis’ growing thirst for water, the Owens River and its Lake were no longer enough to satisfy its ever-lengthening drinking straw. The DWP gradually stretched its arm farther north, until it seized the Mono Basin. Slowly it began to choke its creeks—the very arteries it needed to survive, its green and blue veins of life died away. And the lake shrank.</p> <p>But there were people who knew better. The effects that were beginning to show on the lake shocked them. When the shore drew back, it exposed a land bridge to an important nesting area, leaving thousands of migratory birds, who had made their home on the islands of Negit and Paoha for ages, exposed to predation and death from coyotes. A man named David Gaines formed the Mono Lake Committee, a group of brave souls who stood up for a wild land that could not. They worked to make sure that Los Angeles should never be allowed to do such a thing again. With the efforts of the Committee and others, the Lake could now fight back. Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area formed, and the restoration of the lake began. Slowly, the green and blue hues of life once again returned to Rush Creek and the other tributaries that end their journeys at the lake. Mono reclaimed the land connecting the islands. Although progress has been made, it will be many long years before Mono will return to its original capacity. No longer does Los Angeles take its water mercilessly and heedlessly, and now acts with a much more responsible hand to the land. Mono Lake won its first battle, yet there are—and unfortunately will be—many others. The latest is a proposed subdivision within its boundaries of the Scenic Area, now threatening the environmental integrity and raw beauty of the basin. The proposal would line Mono’s western shore with a group of tract homes. The committee continues to fight its</p>	<p>Revisiting and reimagining the present.</p> <p>Touching back to the past to propel to the present then to the future then to the persuasive.</p> <p>Emotional diction that supports the case she is making for Mono Lake.</p> <p>Tone is created with deadly glutinous terms.</p> <p>The simple use of but as a transition word.</p> <p>History as support for the argument.</p> <p>To the present political context.</p>		<p>Recursive writing of ideas.</p> <p>Word choice contributes to tone.</p> <p>Ways of transitioning</p> <p>The role of facts in analytical argument writing.</p> <p>The need for conflict to create interest, tension, and significance.</p> <p>Attention to audience needs</p>
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<p>progress with grassroots supporters. Only time will tell whether their endeavor will be triumphant over the encroaching development that still threatens Mono Lake.</p> <p>Turning onto the highway now, I drive back to Lee Vining, but slowly, with the highest setting on my windshield wipers as a deluge of precipitation pounds down on my car. Eventually, I pull off of the road altogether and wait for the cloudburst to pass. Slowly, the rain passes, moving to the south. I am able to see the crest of the Sierra again, veiled at the top with the white gauze of falling snow. Driving to the very foot of these mountains, I enter the hamlet of Lee Vining, home of the Mono Lake Committee. The doors are open for the day, welcoming many others and me. We marvel at the accounts and artifacts of the Battle of Mono Lake. Photographs, exhibits, and maps all chart the progress of the lake as it gradually regains health. The committee headquarters is the fort that protects Mono Lake, and people who share a love for this area are its soldiers—the ones who help keep the lake alive, the people who care, who take action. When you first visit the committee, you can see people who are marveling at Mono for the first time. When I went to Lee Vining, I did not just see solitary people at the visitor's center. I saw families, friends on vacation, people from Los Angeles and elsewhere, all learning and sharing their newly-found knowledge about Mono Lake, becoming excited and inspired to help save the lake. They are part of a spirit of optimism in California, one that believes to change things for the better, the power lies in the hands of the people. A dream that believes you can solve any problem if you care enough about it. However, these optimistic people must have caution.</p> <p>Not everyone knows the power and history behind Mono Lake, nor do they bother to find out. Everyone does not share the fight of those who care for the lake. Some people wish to develop the land surrounding Mono, and want to build a vacation home there, or create more real estate. Others do not care at all, because they have not taken the time to explore the lake, or even travel outside their own sprawling city or suburb. For every few people who stop there, a few hundred drive by, on their way to Yosemite, Reno, or other places along 395. Those few hundred will never support efforts to save the lake. But, for the committee and the people who care, all they can do is hope that the ones who do stop on their way elsewhere will have been inspired by the efforts to keep Mono Lake alive. For, with any luck, the people who do take time to stop will be the ones to help save the last pockets of wild California, which even as I write, the new subdivision or vacation home developments draw closer to.</p>	<p>Continued pushing of purpose and intention.</p> <p>Back to the beginning.</p> <p>The purpose to persuade readers to consider the plight of Mono Lake is clear and this section brings readers back to that intention.</p> <p>Writer sees with new perspective. Renewed faith in people to smooth out struggles.</p> <p>Acknowledges that the struggle isn't over.</p> <p>Personalized conclusion that brings us back to the present concern and the reason for her argument—the battle for Mono Lake.</p>		<p>Revisiting an idea without repeating it.</p> <p>Reflection brings clarity and new understanding.</p> <p>Anticipate reader's questions.</p> <p>Conclusions</p>
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