<table>
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<th>Score</th>
<th>Focus &amp; Organization</th>
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| 4     | In response to the task and the stimuli, the writing:  
• contains an effective and relevant introduction.  
• states a claim and maintains a sophisticated argument.  
• utilizes effective organizational strategies to logically order reasons and evidence to create a unified whole.  
• effectively clarifies relationships among claim(s), reasons, evidence, and counterclaim(s) to create cohesion.  
• contains an effective and relevant concluding statement or section. | In response to the task and the stimuli, the writing:  
• utilizes well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient evidence from the stimuli to thoroughly and insightfully support logical claim(s), while acknowledging and effectively refuting counterclaim(s).  
• thoroughly and accurately explains and elaborates on the evidence provided, connecting the evidence to claim(s) and counterclaim(s) and demonstrating a clear, insightful understanding of the topic, task, and stimuli. | The writing:  
• illustrates consistent and sophisticated command of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary appropriate to the task.  
• illustrates sophisticated command of syntactic variety for meaning and reader interest.  
• utilizes sophisticated and varied transitional words and phrases.  
• effectively establishes and maintains a formal style and an objective tone. | The writing:  
• demonstrates consistent and sophisticated command of grade-level conventions of standard written English.  
• may contain a few minor errors that do not interfere with meaning. |
| 3     | In response to the task and the stimuli, the writing:  
• contains a relevant introduction.  
• states a claim and maintains a clear argument.  
• utilizes adequate organizational strategies to logically order reasons and evidence to create a mostly unified whole.  
• clarifies most relationships among claim(s), reasons, evidence, and counterclaim(s), but there may be some gaps in cohesion.  
• contains a relevant concluding statement or section. | In response to the task and the stimuli, the writing:  
• utilizes relevant and sufficient evidence from the stimuli to adequately support logical claim(s), while acknowledging and refuting counterclaim(s).  
• adequately and accurately explains and elaborates on the evidence provided, connecting the evidence to claim(s) and counterclaim(s) and demonstrating a sufficient understanding of the topic, task, and stimuli. | The writing:  
• illustrates consistent command of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary appropriate to the task.  
• illustrates consistent command of syntactic variety for meaning and reader interest.  
• utilizes appropriate and varied transitional words and phrases.  
• establishes and maintains a formal style and an objective tone. | The writing:  
• demonstrates consistent command of grade-level conventions of standard written English.  
• contains occasional minor and/or major errors, but the errors do not significantly interfere with meaning. |
| 2     | In response to the task and the stimuli, the writing:  
• contains a limited introduction.  
• states a weak argument.  
• demonstrates an attempt to use organizational strategies to order some reasons and evidence, but ideas may be hard to follow at times.  
• clarifies some relationships among claim(s), reasons, evidence, and counterclaim(s), but there are lapses in focus.  
• contains a limited concluding statement or section. | In response to the task and the stimuli, the writing:  
• utilizes mostly relevant but insufficient evidence from the stimuli to partially support claim(s) and counterclaim(s). Some evidence may be inaccurate or repetitive.  
• explains some of the evidence provided, connecting some of the evidence to claim(s) and counterclaim(s) and demonstrating only a partial understanding of the topic, task, and stimuli. There may be some level of inaccuracy in the explanation. | The writing:  
• illustrates inconsistent command of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary.  
• illustrates inconsistent command of syntactic variety.  
• utilizes basic or repetitive transitional words and phrases.  
• establishes but inconsistently maintains a formal style and an objective tone. | The writing:  
• demonstrates inconsistent command of grade-level conventions of standard written English.  
• contains frequent errors that may significantly interfere with meaning. |
| 1     | In response to the task and the stimuli, the writing:  
• contains no or an irrelevant introduction.  
• states an unclear argument.  
• demonstrates an unclear organizational structure; ideas are hard to follow most of the time.  
• fails to clarify relationships among claim(s), reasons, evidence, and counterclaim(s); concepts are unclear and/or there is a lack of focus.  
• contains no or an irrelevant concluding statement or section. | In response to the task and the stimuli, the writing:  
• utilizes mostly irrelevant or no evidence from the stimuli, or mostly/only personal knowledge to inadequately support claim(s) and counterclaim(s). Evidence is inaccurate or repetitive.  
• inadequately or inaccurately explains the evidence provided; evidence, claim(s), and counterclaim(s) appear disconnected, demonstrating little understanding of the topic, task, and stimuli. | The writing:  
• illustrates little to no use of precise language and domain-specific vocabulary.  
• illustrates little to no syntactic variety.  
• utilizes no or few transitional words and phrases.  
• does not establish or maintain a formal style and an objective tone. | The writing:  
• demonstrates limited command of grade-level conventions of standard written English.  
• contains numerous and repeated errors that seriously impede meaning. |

1 Evidence includes facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information appropriate to the task and stimuli.

2 Acknowledgement of counterclaim(s) is expected in grades 6–8. Refutation of counterclaim(s) is expected at grade 8.

3 Domain-specific vocabulary refers to the terminology used in the stimuli and/or associated with the topic.

4 Conventions of standard written English include sentence structure, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.