1. I Imagine this situation!

A noise outside awakens you one night. You look out the window and see a spaceship. The door of the spaceship opens, and out walks a space creature. What does the creature look like?

What do you do? Write a story about what happens next.
## Scoring Guide

### Score & Description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
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| **Excellent** | Tells a clear story that is well developed and shaped with well-chosen details across the response.  
Is well organized with strong transitions.  
Sustains variety in sentence structure and exhibits good word choice.  
Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation are few and do not interfere with understanding. |
| **Skillful** | Tells a clear story that is developed and shaped with details in parts of the response.  
Is clearly organized, but may lack some transitions and/or have occasional lapses in continuity.  
Exhibits some variety in sentence structure and some good word choices.  
Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation do not interfere with understanding. |
| **Sufficient** | Tells a clear story that is developed with some details.  
The parts of the story are generally related, but there are few or no transitions.  
Exhibits control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure, but sentences and word choice may be simple and unvaried.  
Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation do not interfere with understanding. |
| **Uneven** | May be characterized by one or more of the following:  
Attempts to tell a story, but parts of the story are unclear, undeveloped, list-like, or repetitive OR offers no more than a well-written beginning.  
Is unevenly organized; parts of the story may be unrelated to one another.  
Exhibits uneven control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; may have some inaccurate word choices.  
Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation sometimes interfere with understanding. |
| **Insufficient** | May be characterized by one or more of the following:  
Attempts to tell a story, but the attempt may be a fragment and/or very undeveloped.  
Is very disorganized throughout the response OR too brief to detect organization.  
Minimal control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; word choice may often be inaccurate.  
Errors in grammar or usage (such as missing words or incorrect word use or word order), spelling, and punctuation interfere with understanding in much of the response. |
Unsatisfactory
May be characterized by one or more of the following:

- Responds to prompt, but provides little or no coherent content OR merely paraphrases the prompt.
- Has no apparent organization OR consists of a single statement.
- Minimal or no control over sentence boundaries and sentence structure; word choice may be inaccurate in much or all of the response.
- A multiplicity of errors in grammar or usage (such as missing words or incorrect word use or word order), spelling, and punctuation severely impedes understanding across the response.

Excellent - Student Response (please see the following page)

1 Imagine this situation!
A noise outside awakens you one night. You look out the window and see a spaceship. The door of the spaceship opens, and out walks a space creature. What does the creature look like? What do you do?
Write a story about what happens next.
Crash! A noise awakened me from my midnight
chatter. I looked about nervously wondering where
the noise had come from. Another sound like gas
escaping from a sore went I leaned out of the bedroom
window. Slowly I put the curtains in
what I was almost made me scream.

Standing about 20 feet away in the window is
an alien body in a purple-blue light. It reminded
me of an X-Files alien. At first glance, I noticed
its prominent black eyes, long, thin nose, well-
skinned lips, high cheekbones, and small,
slightly protruding ears. It was also bald.

When I looked at it more thoroughly, other
details came to mind. It looked to be about
5'3" with greenish-white skin and a strong,
and nimble body. I can only guess as to
what its real body was like under its peach-
colored space suit.

Slowly it raised its hand and waved to
me. I wondered if I should wave back or
not and decided to, even though I was
scared enough to turn and run screaming
down the hallway. But I waved instead.

As I stood there, waving like a fool, I began
to think really weird things. Things like
"Help me save your planet?" and "Burn me!",
helped on some subconscious level I realized
it was communicating telepathically. I tried
to read it as if I could telepathically "read" said.

Through our telepathic communication,
I found out I was supposed to help him
see Earth. I noticed he was now suited in
full Armani attire.

I deliberated with myself and decided
to help it.

Now as I look back, it seems so
weird. At first, but then I remember
all the previous had transpired and
how we saved Earth. It was one of the
best times of my life.
Scorer Comments:
This "Excellent" response has a dramatic opening: "Crash! A noise awakened from my midnight slumber." The student sustains dramatic action throughout the story, and provides precise detail that makes it easy to visualize the space creature: "Standing about 20 ft. from my window is an alien bathed in purple-blue light." The student describes his or her own reaction to heighten suspense: "...I was scared enough to turn and run screaming down the hallway, but I waved instead." Although the action in the second part of the story is somewhat telescoped, the response is complete and well-developed overall.

Excellent - Student Response (please see the following page)
I awoke from a deep sleep with sweet songs in my head. I tried to open my eyes, but I was held captive by a memory.

I held onto the crickets chirping quietly and tried to keep them still.

As soon as my eyes glared, the yellow it was so a yellow cord from outside. Light entered the room. I could see things from my past, things too bitter to explain. Everything except the sound like a distant wind, a sound in the basket of my mouth. It was an image of a book, but why was it still this time, and not a filled memory?

Carefully, I reached to the cord, and placed it on my shoulders.

When I opened it, I saw a flame from a stove, falling on my window, filling me with curiosity. Filled me, and my old thoughts were empty.

Heads were sometimes of the small things, but I was a part of his past thoughts. Exited by this, I ran out of my window to explore. I walked through the town, and finally I found it. It was a large tree, and I could tell that I was actually in a few feet of the ground. Suddenly, I too a place on different from the rest of the tree, and had to imagine it too. Just as I opened my mouth to speak, I felt...
Scorer Comments:
The writing in this "Excellent" response is detailed and compelling. The first sentences --"I awoke from a deep sleep with sweat covering my body. I was dazed and confused; frantically I struggled to regain a lost memory but, as it had so many times before, the memory faded away" -- pull the reader into a well-crafted, exciting story. On almost every level, this writer demonstrates "excellent" development, precision of detail, and command of grammar.

Skillful - Student Response (please see the following page)

1 Imagine this situation!
A noise outside awakens you one night. You look out the window and see a spaceship. The door of the spaceship opens, and out walks a space creature. What does the creature look like? What do you do?
Write a story about what happens next.
It is 3:30 in the morning and I am suddenly woken by a spaceship that just landed in my backyard. I am very scared, nervous, and excited. The door on the spaceship opens and a dark cloud of smoke pours out of the ship along with a little green gas creature. I am not sure what to do. I don't want to scream and wake up everyone in the house and cause alarm. The creature must just landed in my backyard. I lay down on my bed for a minute and think what to do and then I look out my window again. The creature is now going through the garbage can; I wonder, maybe he is hungry?

I get down on my knees and make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and go outside. Lo and behold, the creature is sitting by my sudden presence, but then he sees what I have in my hand. He comes running towards my hand but then I realize he cannot. The creature, I give it to him and he throws it about twenty feet in the air, and catches it in his mouth and swallows. The little creature looks at me and considers his meal. He is in some type of foreign language, gets in his ship and smiles and disappears. I never see the creature again, but some times, really late at night, I could swear I hear someone making a wunderdood in the kitchen.

NAEP released item, grade 8
“What’s that strange noise outside?” I wondered to myself. As I looked straight out my window, I saw this U.F.O. with a hatch opening on the side. I was staring at a flat, green, hairy little creature that I guessed to be about 4’0” tall. I started to get scared when he motioned me to get in his spaceship. But then I regained control of myself. While standing close to the spaceship, it was charred black and had little lights all over it. It was also round in shape. I hopped inside of it and there was so many computers that I had never seen before. The alien got inside and asked me if I had any lignite or if our people were still using gasoline. I told him that we only had gas. He asked me if I knew where there was lignite and I told him that a shop in town sold it but it was closed. The alien didn’t care about the shop being closed. He just broke in. When it got dark it told me its name was Coriolis and that lignite was his source of fuel. When he cut all the fuel in, he said good-bye. Then I woke up from my dream and saw that everything was perfectly normal.

Scorer Comments:
This response is written very clearly and with good use of detail throughout. The student invents a new kind of fuel, "lignite," which the alien uses. Though the response ends rather suddenly and anticlimactically, the student's control of language, clear organization, and use of detail earned this response a rating of "Skillful."
Sufficient - Student Response

Imagine this situation!
A noise outside awakens you one night. You look out the window and see a spaceship. The door of the spaceship opens, and out walks a space creature. What does the creature look like? What do you do?
Write a story about what happens next.

When I was woken up there, in my backyard was a spaceship, I took a drink of water that is always at my bed. The ship's door open, now I'm shaking the creature walks out. The alien was about 11 feet tall, a light black color, expect a white spot on his head, he or she was a very bulge shirt with red strips, and just nose bulge pants, he or she also had no shoes. It had big round eyes, little holes on the side of its head, small mouth, & wavy black hair like Elvis. Then out of nowhere he... he...started to dance. Took off his space clothes & it was Elvis himself. He must of stolen a spaceship and escaped the aliens grasp. Well I became to make millions with Elvis, when he would come out before every show he'd put on the alien costume. After two years of show business, Elvis disappeared. The aliens must of gotten to him again. Vah Hub,

Scorer Comments:
In this "Sufficient" response, the student uses humor to provide a narrative that engages the reader. The transitions between parts of the story are occasionally abrupt, and the sentences are simple in structure. The student also makes some errors in grammar and spelling ("Well I became to make millions with Elvis.") On the whole, though, the meaning of the story is clear and there are some interesting details: "It had...wavy black hair like Elvis."
The space ship it was about as big as a school. When the door opened, an alien stepped out. He had an egg shaped head, with black, hairy eyes, white short body, with long arms, and three long fingers. He took his helmet off and started talking in some different language. Then he pressed a button and started speaking in English. He said, greetings Earthling, my name is Renobe what is your name? My name is Frank, nice to meet you. He asked me if I wanted to go on a journey with him. I said sure we got in his space craft and shot up through the clouds at 1,000 knots place. He asked what I would like to do. I said let's go exploring other galaxies. We went where no man has gone before. We went to the Condegua galaxy. It has seven 12 moons and 54 planets in its system. We started debating and thats when he said it time to go home. He dropped me off and then all of a sudden I woke from my great dream.

Scorer Comments:
This "Sufficient" response has a clear beginning, middle, and end, and does apply the general conventions of storytelling. Though the conventions of dialogue are not followed precisely, this writer attempts to add speaking parts to the story to heighten interest. Some nice detail ("We went to the Condegua galaxy. It has seven 12 moons and 54 planets in its system.") is hampered by subtle yet pervasive errors in punctuation and rather thin development of plot. The sentences, for the most part, are simple and unvaried. This response is a good example of a "Sufficient" paper that, though hampered by lack of development and some writing flaws, still tells a story that is clear and relatively detailed.
Imagine this situation! A noise outside awakens you one night. You look out the window and see a spaceship. The door of the spaceship opens, and out walks a space creature. What does the creature look like? What do you do?

Write a story about what happens next.

I was just staring out my window at the creature. I was so frightened. Its eyes were pitch black and huge, it was just barely 3 feet tall, it was wearing a purple velvet spacesuit and had off-white yellowish skin. All of a sudden it started walking towards me. Then it shattered my window with its fist and grabbed my head as if to have it. I said, "Welcome to earth."

Scorer Comments:
This "Uneven" response has some vivid description of the space creature: "it was whering a purple velvet spacesuit." It does not provide much beyond that description and a couple of plot events. The lack of development, as well as problems with sentence structure, earned this paper an "Uneven" rating.
I was once awakened by a loud noise outside. I got out of the bed grabbed a flashlight went to the window lifted the blinds. There was a spaceship in my front yard! I didn't know what to do! Then all of sudden the door of the spaceship opened up and out crawled a little space creature. He had big eyes, an oval head and two holes for nostrils. He had a small vehicle used for getting the kind of friends. He got out of the spaceship walked my window, slammed his hands, two fingers and I froze. He smiled, then he took a picture of me, then went to get more cement. Then he took a picture of me, then went. I was gone, so I just went back to sleep.

Scorer Comments:
This "Uneven" response combines some characterization of the space visitor ("He had big eyes, an oval head, and two holes for nostrils") with some very general, imprecise development. The reader is introduced to the "little space creature," but this creature leaves before the tale unfolds much further. Statements such as "He looked kind of friendly" are not followed up in a way that would add to the story's development. Sentence boundaries are unevenly observed; correct sentences such as "I didn't know what to do!" are interspersed with sentences such as "I got out of the bed grabbed a flashlight went to the window lifted the blinds" that have errors in both punctuation and syntax. Overall, the level of sentence control and development make this an "uneven" response to the topic.
Imagine this situation!

A noise outside awakens you one night. You look out the window and see a spaceship. The door of the spaceship opens, and out walks a space creature. What does the creature look like? What do you do?

Write a story about what happens next.

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The creature is big and green with a big head and big huge eyes in the front and back of his head. He has short arms and has big legs with no toes. Than he shot laser beams into my eyes I guess so he could read my mind and that is why he did that. Then I invited him into my house so we could play games...

Scorer Comments:

This "Insufficient" response has some vivid description of the creature, with "big huge eyes in the front and back of his head." It also includes some dramatic action: "he shot laser beams into my eyes I guess so he could read my mind." The entire lack of punctuation makes it hard to know where sentences begin and end, and so make the story somewhat hard to read throughout. The vocabulary is also rather simple.

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Imagine this situation!

A noise outside awakens you one night. You look out the window and see a spaceship. The door of the spaceship opens, and out walks a space creature. What does the creature look like? What do you do?

Write a story about what happens next.

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NAEP released item, grade 8
If noise outside wakes me up, I would see what it is then wake everybody up. They would take a glimpse of what it is doing. I would call the cops and have them come to the house right away. Then we would have them go away so we can get some sleep.

**Scorer Comments:**
This "Insufficient" response does not so much tell a story as respond to the question, "What would you do if a noise woke you up at night?" For the most part, this writer is in control of sentence boundaries. The problem here is less with syntax than with development. The very brief description of the action does not develop elements of a story such as description, characterization, or plot. Overall, this is an "insufficient" response to the task.

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**Unsatisfactory - Student Response**

1. Imagine this situation!

A noise outside awakens you one night. You look out the window and see a spaceship. The door of the spaceship opens, and out walks a space creature. What does the creature look like? What do you do?

Write a story about what happens next.

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**Scorer Comments:**
This response was rated "Unsatisfactory" because it is so brief and undeveloped and contains numerous errors. It does have a few interesting details: "It has...silver eyes dark green head that glows."
I saw the spaceship look like a person that look good and they look like they have and person not and were sick they look good. I was look at there when they were in the story and until they get out the story look like it was good and it had one door he was talk door and barn door and some good here.

Scorer Comments:
The errors in this “Unsatisfactory” response are so pervasive that it is difficult to make sense of the story. Though the writer is trying to respond to the topic, he or she is so hampered by lack of command of grammatical and syntactical conventions (such as sentence boundaries) that it is very difficult to decipher the story that is offered. The writing and development in this piece are clearly “Unsatisfactory.”
1998 National Performance Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Percentage of Students</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Skillful</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
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Note:

- These results are for public and nonpublic school students.
- Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Purpose for Writing: Narrative Writing

NAEP released item, grade 8
**Purpose for Writing**

**Narrative Writing**

Narrative writing involves the production of stories or personal essays. Practice with these forms helps writers to develop an ear for language. Also, informative and persuasive writing can benefit from many of the strategies used in narrative writing. For example, there must be an effective ordering of events when relating an incident as part of a report.

Sometimes narrative writing contributes to an awareness of the world as the writer creates, manipulates, and interprets reality. Such writing -- whether fact or fiction, personal essay, or creative narrative -- requires close observation of people, objects, and places. Further, this type of writing fosters creativity, imagination, and speculation by allowing the writer to express thoughts and then stand back, as a more detached observer might, and grasp more fully what is being felt and why. Thus, narrative writing offers a special opportunity to analyze and understand emotions and actions.