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Assessment Analysis

One of the assessments I gave my students was in the form of an essay. It was during a unit on the Renaissance, and the question that was posed to the students was: To what extent do individual accomplishments impact the growth of society? The directions that went with this essay included the following: There needs to be a thesis statement, topic sentences, and body paragraphs including specific people and their contributions to society and a closing statement. Additionally, list details about how or what these people did and the most important part is to have something about the impact they have on society. (Use a minimum of two Renaissance individuals). This was a question that we had gone over multiple times in class. There had been days where we researched people from the Renaissance to see what work they created and the lasting impact of it. The reason for this is so that students can see how history from the Renaissance can relate to them today. Even though it was hundreds of years ago, a lot of work people did still have an impact on society today. In terms of doing research on the individuals they would put in their essay, students had plenty of time in class, and there were worksheets they did to help them answer this question. If they used their time correctly, there was no need for additional research to be done outside of class. The essay was worth fifty points and counted as a test grade.

In response to the prompt, this is what I was looking for from my students. I wanted all the directions followed. I wanted to see a thesis statement. I wanted to know what I would be reading about in the essay from that sentence. Additionally, there needed to be topic sentences. I want students to get in the habit of writing well, or at least trying to improve their writing abilities. What was really important to the content of the essay was the people they choose to use

in it. I wanted their names and what works they did, or helped create. I needed details that were specific to that person to show they knew who they were talking about. In the directions, it says that the students need to discuss the impact that the people they choose had on society. If they were able to give me good, specific examples, then I know they did their homework and took some time to research the material. If a student was able to have a good thesis statement, topic sentences, choose two people and say what they did or help create and the impact they had on society, along with a conclusion, then they would be able to get full credit for this essay.

This first example is from **student A**, and here is what she wrote:

After the dark ages, Europe became more advanced in many areas. The Renaissance is an era in which there were many individuals that impacted their society. Many inventors and artists were able to accomplish new techniques during this time period.

One individual who impacted society was nicolaus Copernicus. He proposed the heliocentric theory of the universe. The heliocentric theory states that the sun is located in the center of the universe. This idea was highly rejected because it placed the sun in the middle of the universe and not the earth like they believed. This made people recant and want to stand up against the church. He also wrote books about his ideas. This lead astronomers and scientists to other new discoveries.

Another well known Renaissance man was sir issac Newton. He was a scientist but was also smart in other areas also. He explained the law of gravity along with other discoveries. He is known as one of the most influential scientists of all times and he was involved in the scientific revolution. Another scientist and astronomer was Galileo. Galileo used technology to develop a Dutch grinder to assemble a telescope. He was the first person to really get to see the details, such as mountains and formations on the moon and sun. His invention lead to understanding the

universe better. A group that would benefit from his work would be NASA.

Leonardo Da Vinci is. A great example of a individual who impacted the growth of society. He was intelligent in many areas. He was curious and wanted to gain a better understanding of the human body. He dissected corpses to get a better understanding of anatomy. This helped him with the details of paintings and sculptures. He also used perspective in his art work which spread to other painters. Two of his better work are the Mona Lisa and his flight machine. His understanding of the human body helped to write medical books and the wright brothers be fitted from his flight machine.

There are also people from the 21st century who have had accomplishments that impact the growth of society. We live in a world currently full of new and advanced technology. Steve jobs is a great example of this. Apple products are common and used all over earth. Another 21st century person who impacted the growth would be the owners of windows, Google, Twitter, and Facebook.

Overall one individuals accomplishments can impact the growth of society in the past, during the present, and in the future.

**Grade:** 50/50

**Original response:** Well written essay. Good use of people and details. Good job of explaining vocab words to show you know what they are.

**Essay Analysis:** After taking a closer look at the essay, it was easy to see why this grade got such a high score. In the opening paragraph, the author write, “Many inventors and artists were able to accomplish new techniques during this time period.” This was their thesis statement. It was not the strongest, as they could have said something about the lasting impact that these

people were able to have on society. It is great that they were able to accomplish many new things, but it says nothing about helping us today.

In the second paragraph, the author talks about Copernicus and the heliocentric theory. That is something that we discussed in class. The student did well in not just saying that he invented the theory, but added this as well, “The heliocentric theory states that the sun is located in the center of the universe. This idea was highly rejected because it placed the sun in the middle of the universe and not the earth like they believed.” This shows me that they actually understand what the theory is by explaining it. The part that needs more explanation in this paragraph is the end. There needs to be more added on after “This lead astronomers and scientists to other new discoveries.” If you are going to tell me they lead to new discoveries, then I would like to at least know what one or two of them are.

In the third paragraph, the student talks about Sir Isaac Newton. She says, “he was a scientist but was also smart in other areas also.” I know he was a smart man and you tell me that, but to prove it, tell me what else he was good at or had a lot of knowledge in. Just saying he was smart in other areas could mean many different things. I also realize this is a small detail to this piece of writing, but these are the types of things that can make essays really stand out. In the same paragraph, she talks about Galileo. This was a much stronger part than Newton. She says that “His invention lead to understanding the universe better. A group that would benefit from his work would be NASA.” This shows that he had an impact on today’s society, which is what I am looking for. The essay states what he invented. Also, how it helped society at the time of the invention, and how it translates to today. For that paragraph, she could have left of Newton and been fine, because they only need to have two different people from the Renaissance, and they have three with another paragraph to go.

In the fourth paragraph, the student talks about Da Vinci. She said he was curious and wanted to know more about the human body so “he dissected corpses to get a better understanding of anatomy.” This is good because it says how he gained more knowledge. It gives detail and shows that the student actually used her time wisely in class to research and find this information. The last part of the paragraph states that “the wright brothers benefited from his flight machine.” What I want to know is how did they benefit from the flight machine? Most of the paragraph talks about the human body, and to me it feels like the part about the flight machine is just casually thrown in there. The essay concludes just fine, even if the paragraph is only one sentence. I think it is a very nice way to wrap it all up.

Overall, I think this was a very good essay. The student showed understanding of the material she learned by using vocab words and being able to explain what they mean. She was also able to talk about the accomplishments of many different people during the scientific revolution. She talked about their discoveries and then showed how they influenced the present day society. I am happy this essay, because I feel the student took away the knowledge that I wanted. They realize that what people did hundreds of years ago, is still relevant today and will still be in the future.

### **Student B**

Individuals impact society greatly, even if they don't know it at the time when they are doing this great thing that effects the world hundreds of years later. I feel someone like Galileo is a great example of this. He went against the churches beliefs and said the earth rotates around sun, rather than everything rotating around the earth. This made him look like he didn't think the world wasn't important which is what the people their viewed as religious truth. This impacts us

today because if he hadn't questioned the church we might not know stuff today that we know as a scientific truth.

**Grade:** 30/50

**Original Response:** Need at least one more person. You were supposed to have at least 2. Very basic information, needs details. You are talking about Copernicus, not Galileo in this essay. Should have a thesis statement also.

**Essay Analysis:** To start, there is only one paragraph to the entire essay. The directions state that there needs to be a thesis statement, topic sentences, and body paragraphs. There are no body paragraphs, there might be a thesis statement, but it could also just be the beginning of the essay, like an introduction. There are no topic sentences either.

As far as content goes, he only chooses to talk about one person in his essay when he needed at least two. The other problem is the he said, "like Galileo is a great example of this. He went against the churches beliefs and said the earth rotates around sun, rather than everything rotating around the earth." It is actually Copernicus that says this with his heliocentric theory. This student uses one person, and does not use what they did in the correct manner.

The next line in this students essay says, "This made him look like he didn't think the world wasn't important which is what the people their viewed as religious truth." This sentence to me is a little unclear. I do not know why he is saying that this idea about the sun and earth makes Galileo think that the world is not important. I think the part about the religious truth he is trying to say that the heliocentric theory goes against church teachings, and that is why the church did not want people knowing about it because it made them wrong in this situation and could allow people to question them on other information they were telling people.

As far as an impact on today's society, he said, "This impacts us today because if he hadn't questioned the church we might not know stuff today that we know as a scientific truth." This would be an okay sentence if he had evidence to back up this claim. He says that we might not know some stuff today, but I would like to know which type of information he is talking about. This is an abrupt way to end the essay, with virtually no conclusion, which he needed to have. After reading the entire essay and looking at the requirement, I feel that I may have been a bit too nice in terms of the grade he received, because there really was not much content to all the writing.

I do not think this student really learned much, as far as what he took away. He learned that the sun was the center of the universe and that was about it, or at least that is all he showed from this essay. He also learned that the church did not want people to go against them, but we had learned that in previous chapters. I wish that if this is all the student knew, they would have asked for help at some point during the unit to get help from me, so I could have helped them achieve a better score on this essay.

### **Student C**

Individuals themselves have a very big impact on the growth of society and the Renaissance proves exactly that. During the Renaissance, many people expanded their knowledge in topics such as math, science, government and art and used their knowledge to not only change but to improve the society.

Some of the things invented during the Renaissance play a big role in our society today. Galileo invented the modern telescope during that time period. Galileo's telescope helped to prove the heliocentric theory that Copernicus proposed. Because of this, today we have enough knowledge for NASA's program to do things like send satellites and even astronauts into space.

We get the opportunity to learn about and even look at the stars today all because of Galileo's incredible thoughts and actions.

Harvey also played a big role in the renaissance. He discovered the circulation of blood and bowed the heart as a pump for the first time. Because of this, today we do things as advanced as heart replacement and heart valve surgeries.

Leonardo Da Vinci is famous for his Mona Lisa painting but he also did some other impressive things. He drew very detailed anatomy and many of his techniques are still used by artists today. He also was an engineer. He drew parachutes and they were made off of his drawing. Today, parachutes are used not only for fun but even in some people's jobs in their everyday life.

Gutenberg was an inventor during the Renaissance. He invented the printing press. This invention encouraged many people to start reading and writing which without a doubt helped the growth of society. If Gutenberg hadn't done this, people's advancements in reading and writing could be very behind and things today could be very different.

All in all, individuals have an extremely big effect on the growth of society. The individuals during the Renaissance are just the same as some individuals today and we would be no where without them.

**Grade:** 48/50

**Original Response:** Good use of people, nice job on using more than 2 people. Only thing to get a stronger score was a little more detail and vocab use from the unit.

**Essay Analysis:** I think that the introduction is a good start. It has a good opening and there is a thesis statement. The final part of the thesis statement is “used their knowledge to not only

change but to improve the society,” and I think that it sets up the essay well and let me know what I will be reading moving forward.

For the next paragraph, the part that stood out was when the impact on today’s society was talked about. This student said ,” today we have enough knowledge for NASA's program to do things like send satellites and even astronauts into space” She could have just said that Galileo helped with stuff NASA does, but she took it a step further and added details to her writing by saying what NASA does.

In the paragraph about Da Vinci, she was able to say how he was more than just an artist. She stated, “He also was an engineer. He drew parachutes and they were made off of his drawing.” What this shows me is that she took the time to research him and found he was a very smart man, as he was an engineer. She was learning about the importance of Da Vinci and found what he did other than art.

In the paragraph about Gutenberg, I wanted to know more information. The part where it says, “things today could be very different.” I want to know what things she is talking about. There needs to be more detail. I want some more explanation on what it might be like if it were not for Gutenberg inventing the printing press. Other than that paragraph, I felt that this was a strong essay. The writer showed that she understood material, but also did not waste time in class and found quite a bit of information about these different men during the renaissance. I think she understands the importance of all these different men, which is something I wanted the students to gain.

When looking at these three different responses, I think it shows that my teaching style may be better to some students than others. Even those these three examples are just a very small sample size, I think it tells me to try to add more variety to my teaching. I need to take a

step back and examine why student B did so poorly, because he was not the only one that had a low score. Yes, there were also others who had very high scores and many people in between, but I need to figure out how I can get those students with the low scores up. I realize now more than at the beginning of the year that every person learns in different ways. Maybe instead of just giving students names of renaissance people and having them look them up and find information about them, I could have had a guided worksheet to point them in the right direction. That may have been a good way to better prepare some students for the essay. Additionally, I think that I just need to get better at reinforcing big ideas throughout all my units I teach. I may go over it a few times and it sounds great in my head, but I need to reinforce them in different ways to make sure every student understands what I want them to. Overall, I thought the unit went well, not just by looking at the essay scores, but by the engagement from the students and the understanding they showed throughout. Next time, I will just make sure to use more variety throughout the unit, and that will hopefully help me reach more students than I did this time.

