Opinion Essay/Explanation

**Score 4 Benchmark Paper** The writing is focused and purposeful, and it reflects insight into the writing situation. The paper conveys a sense of completeness and includes an attention-getting introduction and a satisfying conclusion. A clear organizational pattern provides for a logical progression of ideas. Three relevant reasons are given, and each is developed in a separate paragraph. Support for each reason is substantial, specific (Senior citizens, kids, and new immigrants), relevant, and illustrative (Coaches have to know their players). The paper demonstrates clarity in the presentation of ideas and creative strategies appropriate to the purpose of the paper (the paper opens with an anecdote, and the writer builds suspense by withholding his or her position until the second paragraph). A mature command of language (frowns, exhausting, passionately) and varied sentence structure contribute significantly to the outstanding quality of this paper.

**Score 3 Benchmark Paper** The writing is focused on the topic and purpose. Reasons are developed in separate paragraphs, but the writer has failed to show how the reasons are connected. More transitional words and phrases are needed. One reason (paragraph 2) is clearly relevant and amply supported. The other two reasons, however (paragraphs 3 and 4), need additional support to make their relevance clear. (What is valuable about being the center of attention? about getting to make decisions?) The writer uses some precise words (continually, stretching, represent, reputation) and varies the construction of many sentences.

**Score 2 Benchmark Paper** The paper is generally focused on the topic and purpose but includes some loosely related material (paragraphs 2 and 4). The writer attempts an organizational pattern, but the absence of transitional words and phrases makes the paper difficult to follow. Only two reasons are given (you get to make things happen and you can create things to do), and support for these reasons is inadequately developed. Some word choice is vague (things, stupid), and many sentences are short and choppy.
Opinion Essay/Explanation (continued)

**Score 1 Benchmark Paper** The paper only minimally addresses the topic and purpose and includes extraneous material (No one listens . . ., To be a great country . . .). The paper shows little organizational pattern. Only two reasons are given (paragraphs 2 and 4), and both reasons are weak and only partially relevant. Support for reasons is illogical (I’d like it if people really listened . . .) or inadequately developed (paragraph 4). Word choice is limited, and most sentences sound the same.