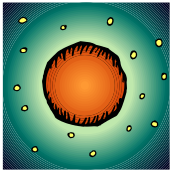


Read the following passage:

If you look up at the sky on a clear night, you may see a red “dot” among the stars. This “dot” is Mars, named in ancient times after the Roman god of war. Although no one has ever visited this red planet, we know a lot about it. This is because we studied it through telescopes but, over the past few years we sent up two rovers (Spirit and Opportunity) and the Phoenix lander to study the planet.



Mars is more like Earth than any other planet in our solar system. Mars has a 24-hour day, a rocky crust, canyons, volcanoes, polar ice caps and seasons. But, Earth and the “4<sup>th</sup> rock from the sun” are hardly twins.

Mars is half as large as Earth and has less gravity. It has a thin atmosphere. The surface of Mars has no bodies of water, plants or animals. No place on Earth gets as cold as Mars. The lack of life on the surface of Mars is not surprising, considering the bone dry environment.

Directions:

*On a piece of loose-leaf paper, write a short essay on the following topic. When you are done, please reread what you wrote to see if it makes sense and check your spelling and grammar. You may include diagrams or drawings. Please put your name, class and band on the top of the paper.*

**Imagine you just returned from a trip to Mars. You brought back something you found there. You analyzed it in your laboratory. Describe the specimen and the environment where you found it. Determine whether it is living or nonliving and in what type of environment you would keep it upon your return to Earth.**



## MARS WRITING ASSIGNMENT RUBRIC

| Criteria                    |  |  |   |   | Points |
|-----------------------------|--|--|---|---|--------|
|                             | 1  | 2  | 3   | 4   |        |
| <b>Organization</b>         | Sequence of information is difficult to follow.                  | Reader has difficulty following work because student jumps around. | Student presents information in logical sequence which reader can follow. | Information in logical, interesting sequence which reader can follow. | _____  |
| <b>Following Directions</b> | Student did not follow assignment directions.                    | Student followed one part of assignment directions.                | Student followed most of assignment directions.                           | Student followed directions accurately.                               | _____  |
| <b>Content Knowledge</b>    | Student did not use information given to enhance work.           | Student used very little information given to enhance work.        | Student used information given to enhance work.                           | Student used information creatively and accurately to enhance work.   | _____  |
| <b>Grammar and Spelling</b> | Work has four or more spelling errors and/or grammatical errors. | Presentation has three misspellings and/or grammatical errors.     | Presentation has no more than two misspellings and/or grammatical errors. | Presentation has no misspellings and/or grammatical errors.           | _____  |
| <b>Neatness</b>             | Work is illegible.   | Work has three or four areas that are sloppy.                      | Work has one or two areas that are sloppy.                                | Work is neatly done.  | _____  |
|                             |  |  |   | <b>Total →</b>  | _____  |

**POINT VALUES (GRADES)**

17 to 20 points = **4**     9 to 12 points = **2**  
 13 to 16 points = **3**     5 to 8 points = **1**

**Teacher Notes:**

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*Adapted from: Writing Rubric ([www.teach-nology.com](http://www.teach-nology.com))*