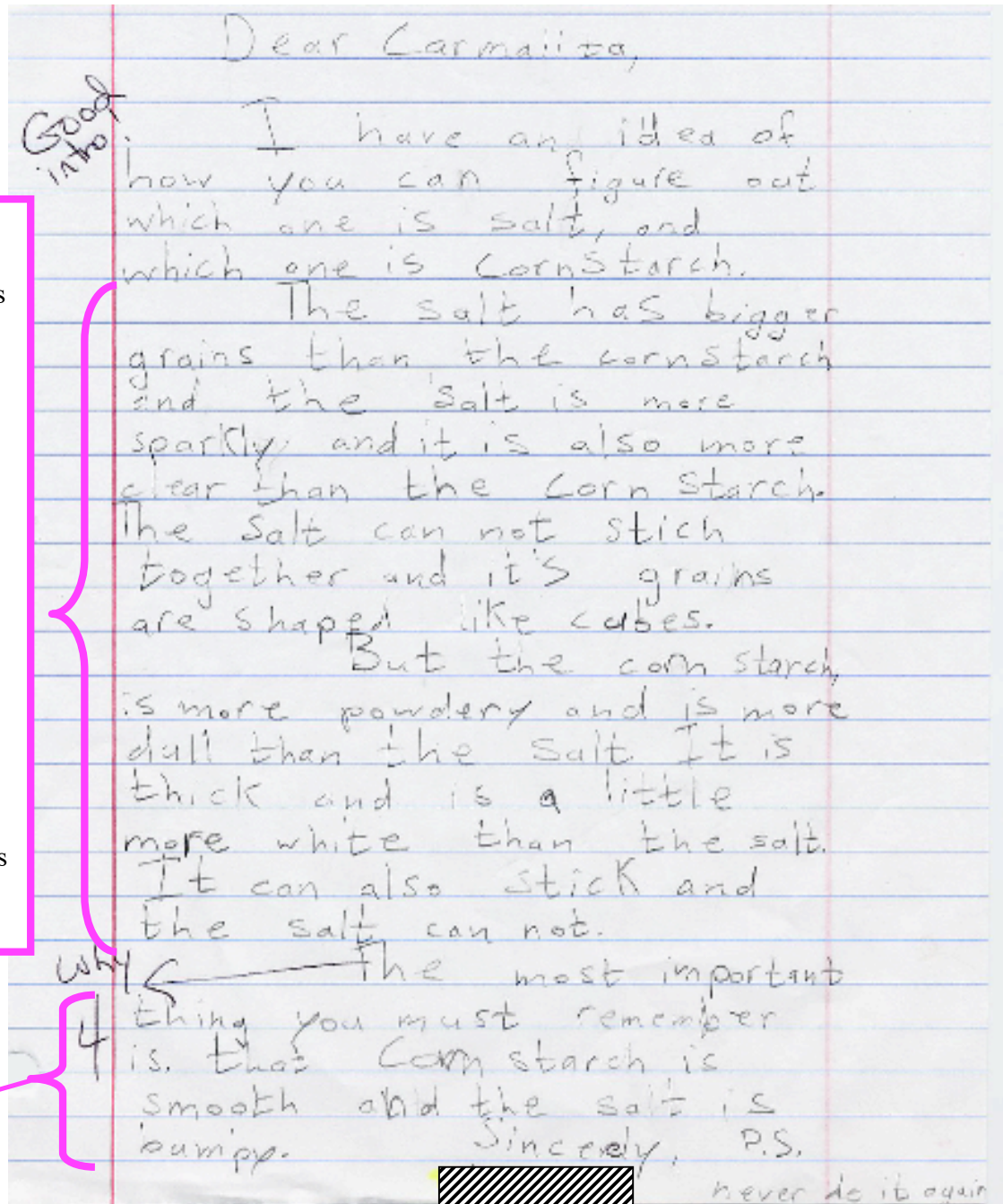


Carmelita Letter

The letter provides students an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of properties by describing two substances—salt and cornstarch. A quality letter should contain enough details to clearly differentiate between the two substances.



This sample includes many quality descriptors of the salt and cornstarch. The student describes the shape of salt (cube), texture (bumpy), and size relative to cornstarch. She describes the cornstarch as smooth, powdery, thick, and whiter than salt. She also compares the way cornstarch grains stick together to the way salt grains remain separate.

As part of the assignment, students were instructed to select the “most important” property that can be used to differentiate between the two substances. They should be able to support their selection. Most students struggled with this part of the assignment and failed to explain why the selected property was critical. Helping students discriminate between unique and common properties of a group of items observed should facilitate growth in this area.