

## Essay evaluation rubric

Criteria	A-level	B-level	What to avoid
<b>Content &amp; Argument</b>			
<b>Approach to subject matter</b>	Original, logical approach to topic that acknowledges complexity and/or nuances of subject matter; sustained, consistent analysis throughout the writing	Logical, appropriate approach to topic; adequate analysis, albeit with some inconsistencies or light depth of engagement	Illogical, inappropriate, or oversimplified approach to topic; inadequate analysis with broad generalizations and frequent inconsistencies
<b>Claims</b>	The writer makes surprising and/or complex claims that weave together into a well-developed argument about the text, providing a persuasive analytical interpretation of the text	The writer makes complex claims that can be supported with evidence from the text, but the claim may be obvious to an informed reader or overly generalizing; OR, the writer makes claims but the claims are buried in indirect language that is difficult for the reader to access	The writer makes a simple claim that requires little demonstration; or, the writer makes complex claims that are (1) not supported by textual evidence, or (2) unclear how they relate to the meaning of the text; or, the writing overall lacks clear claims
<b>Analysis and interpretation</b>	The writer effectively unfolds insightful close readings of the text as evidence to support and develop their larger claims, engaging with specific details of language and formal devices. Textual evidence is germane, appropriately contextualized, and clearly relates to the claims being made	The writer uses close readings as evidence to support some or all of its claims, but these analyses may be underdeveloped, vague, or ambiguous; interpretations are given too quickly	The reader has to guess how the essay's interpretation emerges from the text, as the essay lacks sufficient analysis to bridge the claim and interpretation; there is no textual engagement, although claims and interpretations are being made
<b>Organization</b>			
<b>Introduction</b>	Clarifies for the reader what the writer will discuss, especially the main subject(s) and context(s), and even points the reader toward a culminating argument. The introduction may also delineate the critical stakes of the claims and interpretations that the writer will be offering	Names the subject(s) and context(s) of what the writer will discuss, as well as the critical inquiry undertaken, but through indirect or vaguely phrasing	Does not provide for the reader sufficient details about what the writer will engage with in the assignment; key information such as the text's title or author is omitted or incorrectly identified
<b>Sequence and development of paragraphs</b>	Paragraphs follow logically from the preceding paragraph(s), building on one another to complicate and further develop the essay's argument; fluid transitions between ideas; the reader is able to easily trace a structure and organization to the writing	Some lapses in coherence and analytical development of paragraphs; occasional lack of transitions; the reader is mostly able to follow the logical development of the writer's thinking, but with some effort	Relationships between/among paragraphs are unclear (i.e., the reader finds it consistently difficult to make connections across paragraphs); ideas are scattered across paragraphs instead of grouped together for logical accessibility; inadequate transitions between ideas challenge the reader's understanding
<b>Conclusion</b>	Sums up key takeaways and/or points to larger implications or the stakes of the insights that the writer has	Sums up main ideas and recapitulates the argument	Superficial or cursory summation of main ideas or its argument; language from

	provided; the conclusion may place the writer's ideas in a broader context, or offer a provocation for further thinking		earlier sections of the assignment is repeated exactly
<b>Style</b>			
<b>Grammatical norms and language</b>	Consistently observes standard spelling, punctuation, and grammar; vocabulary is precisely applied, with thoughtful and unambiguous word choice; the reader is not left to guess or intuit the writer's meaning or intent	Uses standard spelling, punctuation, and grammar, with occasional lapses; word choice is appropriate to purpose; the reader mostly has no difficulty in reading, but sometimes has to reread multiple times in order to understand what the writer is trying to convey	Frequent errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar; frequent inappropriate word choice; the reader has to reread multiple times in order to guess the writer's meaning
<b>Sentence clarity and conciseness</b>	Clear sentences with use of active voice; essay treads an engaging balance between economic conciseness in sentence structure and complexity for the sake of critical development	Sentences are readable but occasionally lack conciseness and clarity	Sentences are difficult to follow because of vagueness or ambiguity, or unnecessary length
<b>Voice</b>	The writer's intellectual engagement comes through with thoughtfully crafted prose; it is clear that the writer is not offering personal, unsubstantiated opinions, but meaningful interpretations based on textual materials that coalesce into a larger argument	Writing is clear but sometimes clichéd in phrasing or generalizing in tone	Writing relies on clichéd phrasing or generalizations that causes the reader to doubt the depth of the writer's intellectual engagement