

A 9-Point Rubric for writing about literature

An 8-9 essay responds to the prompt clearly, directly, and fully. This paper approaches the text analytically, supports a coherent thesis with evidence from the text, and explains how the evidence illustrates and reinforces its thesis. The essay employs subtlety in its use of the text and the writer's style is fluent and flexible. It is also free of mechanical and grammatical errors.

A 6-7 essay responds to the assignment clearly and directly but with less development than an 8-9 paper. It demonstrates a good understanding of the text and supports its thesis with appropriate textual evidence. While its approach is analytical, the analysis is less precise than in the 8-9 essay, and its use of the text is competent but not subtle. The writing in this paper is forceful and clear with few if any grammatical and mechanical errors.

A 5 essay addresses the assigned topic intelligently but does not answer it fully and specifically. It is characterized by a good but general grasp of the text using the text to frame an apt response to the prompt. It may employ textual evidence sparingly or offer evidence without attaching it to the thesis. The essay is clear and organized but may be somewhat mechanical. The paper may also be marred by grammatical and mechanical errors.

A 3-4 essay fails in some important way to fulfill the demands of the prompt. It may not address part of the assignment, fail to provide minimal textual support for its thesis, or base its analysis on a misreading of some part of the text. This essay may present one or more incisive insights among others of less value. The writing may be similarly uneven in development with lapses in organization, clarity, grammar, and mechanics.

A 1-2 essay commonly combines two or more serious failures. It may not address the actual assignment; it may indicate a serious misreading of the text; it may not offer textual evidence or may use it in a way that suggests a failure to understand the text; it may be unclear, badly written, or unacceptably brief. The style of this paper is usually marked by egregious errors. Occasionally a paper in this range is smoothly written but devoid of content.
