

AP Holistic Essay Rubric

A (9/8) Paper: Distinguished/outstanding. (Grade Equivalent: 9 = 96; 8 = 92)

Perhaps the principal characteristic of the A paper is its *rich content*. It is dense, packed, or full. The information delivered is such that one feels significantly taught by the author, sentence after sentence, paragraph after paragraph. The A paper is also defined by *stylistic finesse*. The opening paragraph is engaging, the thesis is strong, the transitions are artful, the phrasing is tight, fresh, and highly specific; the sentence structure is varied; the tone enhances the purposes of the paper. Finally the A paper, because of its *careful organization and development*, imparts a feeling of wholeness and unusual clarity. It makes the reading experience not just pleasurable but also a memorable one. It leaves the reader feeling bright and thoroughly satisfied. An A paper sparks a desire to reread the piece.

- **Organization:** clearly stated specific thesis; succeeding paragraphs follow logically from thesis; each paragraph has a topic sentence which develops and refers back to the original thesis.
- **Content:** a persuasive, insightful presentation of your own ideas that analyzes the topic thoroughly; sentences follow logically from each other; writer clearly articulates the relations/connections between ideas and sentences
- **Evidence:** appropriate number of quotations used as evidence to prove thesis; quotations are integrated into the text of the essay (quotations are preceded by an identification of the speaker and brief explanation of context); **quotations are followed by a thorough analysis that shows how they are evidence.**
- **Style:** language is clear and concise with few grammatical or stylistic errors; literary present (tense) used throughout; quotations punctuated and/or blocked properly; written in third person.

B (7/6) Paper: Proficient. (Grade Equivalent: 7 = 86; 6 = 82)

It is significantly more than merely competent. Besides being almost free of grammatical errors, the B paper delivers substantial information that is, substantial in both quantity and interest-value. Its specific points are logically ordered, well developed, and unified around a clear organizing principle that is apparent early in the paper. The opening paragraph draws the reader in; the closing paragraph is both conclusive and thematically related to the opening. The transitions between the paragraphs are for the most part smooth, the sentence structures pleasingly varied. The diction of the B paper is typically much more concise and precise than that found in the C paper. Occasionally even shows distinctiveness – i.e. finesse and memorability. On the whole, then, the B paper makes the reading experience a pleasurable one, for it offers substantial information with few distractions. Displays sound understanding of the text, some originality and a sense of the issues involved in interpretation, rather than mere exposition (background information/summary); may have one or two of the following problems:

- **Organization:** thesis is vague, difficult to understand and/or prove; body paragraphs do not follow logically from thesis and paragraph topic sentences do not clearly relate to overall argument; writing structured by a hidden logic which diminishes the strength of the argument; conclusion merely restates or summarizes the thesis.
- **Content:** structure and argument are clear, but ideas lack depth and/or detail; paper covers topic adequately, but not thoroughly; topic needs more analysis.
- **Evidence:** too few quotations used as evidence or quotations do not prove thesis; quotations are not integrated (see above); quotations could be analyzed more thoroughly; quotations are not cited properly.
- **Style:** a number of grammatical or stylistic errors including vague, repetitious or colloquial (informal/slang) language and/or shifting tenses; occasional use of first or second person, rather than third.

C-D (5/4/3/2) Paper: Basic. (Grade Equivalent: 5 = 76; 4 = 72; 3 = 66; 2 = 62)

It is generally competent, it meets the assignment, has few mechanical errors, and is reasonably well organized and developed. The actual information it delivers, however, seems thin and commonplace. One reason for this impression is that the ideas are typically cast in the form of vague generalities – generalities that prompt the confused reader to ask for more specific details and clarification. Stylistically, the C paper has other shortcomings as well: the opening paragraph may do little to draw the reader in; the final paragraph may offer only a perfunctory wrap-up; the transitions between paragraphs are often bumpy; the sentences, besides being a bit choppy, tend to follow a predictable (hence monotonous) subject-verb-object pattern; and the diction is occasionally marred by unconscious repetitions, redundancy, and impression. The C paper, while it gets the job done lacks the stylistic finesse and intellectual rigor of an upper-level paper. The D paper offers primarily summary, limited analysis, misunderstanding of the prompt, or is riddled with stylistic and grammatical errors. The C and D papers display either uneven performance (serious flaws of comprehension and/or presentation) alongside signs of talent, or competent exposition (background information/summary) without any real attempts at interpretation; may have three of the problems outlined in the B range and/or:

- **Organization:** body paragraphs do not follow logically from thesis; topic sentences are facts rather than arguments; writing structured by plot rather than argument; writing structured by hidden logic which makes paper's argument gap-filled.
- **Content:** depends upon plot summary, rather than analysis or interpretation, inadequate coverage of the topic
- **Evidence:** few quotations, little actual analysis
- **Style:** stylistic and grammatical errors interfere with the content of the essay; continued use of first or second person, rather than third.

NC (1/0) Paper: No Credit. (Grade Equivalent: 1 = 56)

Its treatment and development of the subject are as yet only rudimentary/superficial. While organization may be present, it is neither clear nor effective. Sentences are frequently awkward, ambiguous, and marred by serious mechanical errors. Evidence of careful proofreading is scanty, if nonexistent. The whole piece, in fact, often gives the impression of having been conceived and written in haste. In short, the ideas, organization, or style fall far below what is acceptable of college writing.

- Essay is off-topic (doesn't answer an assigned or approved topic); displays a fundamental misunderstanding of the text; has no thesis or discernible argument; or has three of the problems outlined in the C/D range.
- No paper submitted; paper has been plagiarized (incorporates another author's ideas or language without acknowledgment, or paper is actually written by someone else).