

A Generalized A.P. Essay Rubric

EXCEPTIONAL--8-9

Complex, original, sophisticated, and varied, with no errors in usage.
 Varied sentence construction, with controlled use of subordinate elements.
 Lucid and enjoyable to read; smooth flow of ideas.
 Logical, coherent structure which facilitates flow of ideas or structure of argument.
 Smooth transitions.
 Abundant specific support which relates directly to the stated thesis or argument.
 Nearly flawless. Errors, if any, are minor.

ADMIRABLE--6-7

Varied, with many complex ideas; few, if any, errors in usage; occasional imprecise word choice.
 Uses a variety of sentence forms. Clear prose, with few, if any, tense or agreement errors or awkward constructions.
 Structure appropriate for purpose, although not particularly note-worthy
 Transitions present between elements.
 Primarily specific support with some general statements. Bulk of support is related to thesis.
 A few minor errors: misplaced commas or apostrophes, incorrect capitalization, etc.

ADEQUATE--4-5

Many simple words with some complex ideas, imprecise or incorrect word choice, some errors in usage.
 Primarily simple and short compound sentence structure.
 Several awkward or unclear constructions, tense/agreement errors.
 Follows formulaic structure which may not fit intentions or purpose of piece.
 Transitions, if any, are weak or illogical.
 Specific support, if any, is unexplained or illogical. Mostly general statements which are not tied to the thesis or argument.

NOT ACCEPTABLE--2-3

Multiple minor errors or errors of greater magnitude, including comma splices.
 Primarily simple words; vague, incorrect word choice; use of cliché.
 Almost exclusively simple sentences; convoluted, unclear, repetitious.
 Multiple tense and agreement errors.
 No attempt made at a logical structure. Transitions, if present, are weak or unclear.
 Generalizations, repetitive words and phrases, same idea or example frequently restated.
 Major errors: missing or incorrect punctuation, sentence fragments, comma splices, etc.

The “Rubric of all Rubrics”

- 9-8 **Superior papers** specific in their references, cogent in their definitions, and free of plot summary that is not relevant to the question. These essays need not be without flaws, but they demonstrate the writer's ability to discuss a literary work with **insight and understanding** and to control a wide range of the elements of **effective composition**. At all times they stay focused on the prompt, providing **specific support**—mostly through direct quotations—and connecting scholarly commentary to the overall meaning.
- 7-6 These papers are less thorough, less perceptive or less specific than 9-8 papers. They are **well-written but with less maturity and control**. While they demonstrate the writer's ability to analyze a literary work, they reveal a more limited understanding and less stylistic maturity than do the papers in the 9-8 range.
- 5 Safe and “plastic,” **superficiality** characterizes these essays. Discussion of meaning may be **formulaic**, mechanical, or inadequately related to the chosen details. Typically, these essays reveal simplistic thinking and/or immature writing. They usually demonstrate inconsistent control over the elements of composition and are not as well conceived, organized, or developed as the upper-half papers. However, the writing is sufficient to convey the writer's ideas, stays mostly focused on the prompt, and contains at least some **effort to produce analysis**, direct or indirect.
- 4-3 Discussion is likely to be unpersuasive, perfunctory, **underdeveloped** or **misguided**. The meaning they deduce may be inaccurate or insubstantial and not clearly related to the question. Part of the question may be omitted altogether. The writing may convey the writer's ideas, but it reveals **weak control** over such elements as diction, organization, syntax or grammar. Typically, these essays contain significant **misinterpretations** of the question or the work they discuss; they may also contain little, if any, supporting evidence, and practice **paraphrase and plot summary at the expense of analysis**.
- 2-1 These essays compound the weakness of essays in the 4-3 range and are frequently unacceptably **brief**. They are **poorly written on several counts**, including many **distracting errors in grammar and mechanics**. Although the writer may have made some effort to answer the question, the views presented have little clarity or coherence.
- 0 A response with no more than a reference to the task.
- A blank paper or completely off-topic response.