

## Essay Grading Criteria

I consider each essay in terms of the following: ideas (content); the arrangement of those ideas (form); the effectiveness of your expression of ideas (style); and the mechanical correctness of your writing (mechanics).

What follows are descriptions of characteristics of A, B, C, D, and F essay writing in English 364. These characteristics apply to your revised drafts:

**A**--The essay is of outstanding quality in all, or almost all, respects.

- It has a clear, concise thesis.
- The essay addresses the prompt and surpasses the minimum page requirement.
- It makes an original, provocative argument that illuminates the text(s) under consideration.
- The scope of the essay has been narrowed sufficiently so that the writer can present adequate evidence from the text to support assertions.
- The argument is logical, coherent, and well-supported with evidence in the form of both paraphrase and quotes from the text(s).
- In a comparison/contrast essay, a balanced, equal analysis of both works is achieved.
- MLA format is adhered to in terms of layout, in-text citations, and Works Cited page.
- The sentences are clear, smooth, and consistently grammatical.

**B**--The essay, while living up to many requirements of the ideal essay, nevertheless falls short in one major area.

- Perhaps the conclusion is inadequate to give point and significance to the argument.
- Or perhaps there is a flaw in logic or incoherence at one point in an otherwise coherent, persuasive argument, or evidence may not be adequate.
- Or, in a comparison/contrast essay, both works may not be analyzed in equal depth.
- Or, MLA format may not be strictly adhered to.
- Or perhaps there are minor grammatical errors sprinkled throughout the text.
- Or, the essay may lack in some aspect(s) of the assignment requirements.

**C**--The essay makes a competent case for a commonplace idea about the literary work.

- Perhaps, however, given a significant and original thesis, the essay lacks a sharp focus, so that the argument, though seemingly valid, cannot be supported in any great depth.
- Or, the thesis and support may be nothing more than a rehash of class discussion, without original insights or input from the writer.
- Or, while the essay states an interesting and seemingly valid case, the presentation of the ideas and/or the evidence is occasionally disorganized, meandering, or otherwise lacking in logical coherence.
- Or, there may be little evidence directly cited from the text(s).
- Or, in the case of a comparison/contrast essay, balance in the analysis of the compared works may not be fully achieved.
- Or, MLA format may be flawed or absent.
- Or, in an essay that otherwise would rate a grade of a B, the sentences are consistently awkward, imprecise, or ungrammatical.
- **The essay does not meet the minimum page requirement or may not directly address the prompt.**

**D**--The essay shows serious and consistent problems in formulating a thesis (in a comparison/contrast essay, there may not be a clear basis for comparison between the works), pursuing a logical argument, using evidence, using proper format, or maintaining a respectable prose style.

Whenever the thesis is lacking in significance, clarity, or validity, the essay should be liable to a substandard grade.

**F**--The essay shows a complete misunderstanding of the material dealt with.

- Or, fails to present the materials in the form of an argument.
- Or, it produces no evidence from the text(s).
- Or, its prose fails to meet basic requirements of standard written English.
- Or, it contains plagiarized material.