

FIELDSTON
WRITING GUIDE
2006 EDITION



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FIELDSTON HISTORY & ENGLISH DEPARTMENTS
FIELDSTON **WRITING GUIDE** 2006 EDITION

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I. ACADEMIC HONESTY

Academic honesty is essential for learning and for maintaining a sense of mutual trust and respect within the Fieldston community. Teachers must know that all of the work students present orally or in writing is their own. To present the work of others as one's own is dishonest.

Copying from another student's test, using hidden notes, giving or receiving information on tests, and receiving help on take-home tests without the specific permission of the teacher are clearly dishonest and constitute cheating.

An equally serious violation of academic honesty is plagiarism. This involves taking words, ideas, images, text, or data created by others, *wherever one might find them*, and presenting them as one's own, without giving proper credit to the source. It includes the Internet and the copying and pasting of words, images, and data from a web site into a report or essay. The methods for using and citing these sources will be discussed in classes.

Students are expected to take responsibility for their own academic work within the guidelines established by teachers. Students should assume that all work, including homework, is to be done individually unless the teacher states that collaboration on a particular assignment is permitted. Any assistance a student receives from another person, including a parent, peer, or tutor, should be limited to help in understanding concepts and methods. Any help beyond this must be acknowledged.

The work on any assignment should be one's own and not that of another person. When in doubt, students should either cite the source or consult their teacher. An open exchange of ideas and knowledge can be achieved only in an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding.

“The work on any assignment should be one's own and not that of another person. When in doubt, students should either cite the source or consult their teacher.”

THERE ARE FEW TASKS IN ACADEMIC LIFE more difficult than writing. Many a weekend has been blighted by writing an essay, a process that often goes well into evenings, if not ensuing mornings. This is true even for good writers – indeed, new or uncertain ones often have a mistaken idea that experienced inklingers sit down at a computer keyboards and play them like concert pianists. Sloppy Oscar Madison, the sportswriter character the 1970s sitcom *The Odd Couple*, speaks for many such professionals when he says, “I hate writing – I love having written.”

“A lot of teachers, shameless performers that they are, would happily teach classes for free; salaries are for grading papers.”

I must say, though, that there is something worse than writing academic papers, and that’s reading them: many a weekend has been blighted by *that* chore as well. A lot of teachers, shameless performers that they are, would happily teach classes for free; salaries are for grading papers. If not for a reluctant belief that writing, a strenuously labor-intensive process for everyone involved, is nevertheless at the core of real learning – i.e. something more than mere regurgitation of facts, the core of what it means for a student to actually *make sense* of something – most teachers would gratefully stop giving out writing assignments.

The question, in any case, remains: why, taken as a group, are student essays so bad? Part of the answer is that they *are* taken as group: there are few things more deadening than forty different versions, only about half of them vaguely grammatical and even fewer properly footnoted, of why Shakespeare was such a genius when he wrote *Macbeth*. Mentioning grammar and footnotes brings up another issue: writing papers means learning to conform to a series of rules, ranging from spelling to more subjective matters like tight introductions and clearly sign-posted topic sentences that signal a reader where you’re going. And it takes practice, often mind-numbing practice, to master the formula of the standard academic essay.

Of course, any time you’re talking about a formula, you’re getting into something that’s not only inherently boring – real excitement comes in purposely breaking formulas, not purposefully mastering them – but also raising a legitimate question about how relevant a formula really *is* (how interesting can *any* academic essay on *Macbeth* really be?). Being able to

explain why Shakespeare was such a genius doesn't necessarily mean you're going to be any more capable of selling Hondas to a soccer mom. On the other hand, as any math teacher will tell you, the ability to master one kind of formula really can make it easier to master others, if only from the sense of confidence that experience brings. That's why teachers who know very few of their students will ever end up as Shakespeare scholars nevertheless try and teach them to write like one: you've got to start somewhere, (and teachers typically know more about reading Shakespeare than selling cars).

But the real problem with most student essays has less to do with technique than imagination. Too few writers think hard enough about who they're writing *for*, that a real person reads their work. That's why one often reads disembodied prose that seems to unspool aimlessly from the writer's word-processing software. "One of the most blah blah blahs of any blah blah blah is blah blah blah," is the general spirit of such essays. "But of course your stance toward blah blah blah depends on your perspective." Someone who writes like this isn't thinking very hard, and doesn't exactly make a reader want to think very hard, either – indeed, a teacher often resents assessing this kind of work, because she's going to have to put in more work explaining what's wrong with it than the student ever did in producing it in the first place.

Though not always posed bluntly, there's a question a reader brings to any piece of writing, and that is, "Why should I care?" Teachers are paid to care, but if they're doing their job correctly, they're nudging their students toward producing work that people will want to read on its own merit. And the chief merit of any piece of writing is this: persuasiveness. Good writing brings a reader around to a writer's point of view, whether in the belief that *Macbeth* is a really good play for a particular reason or in a particular way.

Of course, in order to persuade anybody of anything, you have to know what you yourself think about a given subject. Not everybody does. But that's less of a problem than it may appear to be, at least in the early going (and as any serious writer will tell you, writing is *rewriting*). Far worse are those students who know all too well what they think and barrel ahead with a series of bald assertions that alienate rather than persuade. A really good piece of writing will demonstrate an awareness of other points of view, and will address them in one form or another. And while coming to a sense of resolution isn't always easy, engaging imagined skeptics is an important part of drawing useful conclusions for yourself as well as somebody else. The noun "essay" is also a verb that means "to try out." And trying, to return to an earlier point, is to a great degree a matter of imagination: If I were a person who thought differently than me, what would I think? Like a lot of things, doing this successfully takes practice. But that, after all, is what school is for.

“Too few writers think hard enough about who they’re writing for, that a real person reads their work. That’s why one often reads disembodied prose that seems to unspool aimlessly from the writer’s word-processing software. ‘One of the most blah blah blahs of any blah blah blah is blah blah blah,’ is the general spirit of such essays.”

III. MR. CULLEN'S HANDY-DANDY GUIDE TO THE ACADEMIC ESSAY

So, you've been asked to write an essay for your _____ class. Well, it's neither the first nor the last time that you'll have to whip something up (though this time, at least, you're going to start it long before 4 a.m. on the day it's due). In any event, now that you're at the start of one, maybe it's worth asking: Just what is an essay? And what's the best way to go about writing one?

We tend to think of "essay" as a noun, but it's also a verb – it means "to try out." What's being tried out is an idea, a line of thinking. More specifically, an essay in an academic context is a piece of writing that has an **argument** (as opposed, for example, to being a report). And what is an argument? As I define it, it's something that's composed of three core parts:

"We tend to think of 'essay' as a noun, but it's also a verb – it means 'to try out.'"

1. An argument is something that tries to address a **question**. That question should be relatively interesting, something that can't be answered in a straightforwardly factual way. For the purposes of an essay, "How tall was Abraham Lincoln?" is not a good question. A better question is: "How was Abraham Lincoln able to rise from obscurity to become one of the great figures of American history?" Actually, that may be a little *too* good a question, since a whole lot of people have managed to spend the better part of their lives trying to answer it, and we're all hoping that you'll make a little more of yourself than ending up as a historian. In fact, maybe you should steer clear of Abraham Lincoln entirely. Maybe something like, "How did Jane Addams's elite social background help or hurt her in becoming the great social activist she became?" or "Did Zora Neal Hurston's portrayal of black people in books like *Their Eyes Were Watching God* reinforce racial stereotypes? (And just why did she portray African Americans the way she did in the first place?) These are questions you might be able to address, albeit in a limited way, in 5-10 pages.
2. An argument also has a **thesis**. I define a thesis as a not-obvious, but true assertion. A statement that Michael Jordan was an exceptional basketball player is not an especially arresting thesis. Saying that Jordan became an excellent basketball player due to the influence of his history teacher is a very interesting thesis, but unfortunately is not one where you're going to be able to find much **evidence** (and evidence, alas, is one of those things every good argument is going to have to have in abundance. In fact, the best arguments will also have **counter-evidence** – like compelling quotes from people who adamantly deny that Jordan's history teacher had anything to do with his success, along with even more compelling ones from people like Jordan himself who say, yes, as hard as it may be to believe, my success can be directly traced to that class I took back in tenth grade. And here are some statistics that prove it.) In any event, you want

to make your thesis a statement that's perhaps unexpected, but one you can nevertheless show to be true over the course of a few pages and a few sources.

3. Finally, an argument should have a **motive**. This is what Mr. Meyers calls the answer to the “so-what?” question. A motive is the reason why a thesis matters. So Jordan became the ballplayer he did after studying U.S. history. So what? Well, then, maybe high school history teachers should be as well paid as Division I NCAA basketball coaches. If your thesis is that Jane Addams’s elite background actually helped her become the social activist she did, then maybe your motive could be that she’s a truly inspiring – which is why, after writing this very essay, you’ve decided to skip college and start a program to provide Internet access to poor children in Chicago. (Then again maybe not – this will make your parents mad at us for sure.) The motive is the trickiest part of an argument, but it’s also what gives an essay its kick, its vitality.

**In summary, here’s the equation:
question + thesis + motive (so what) = argument**

Now, how will you actually go about plugging in the variables? That’s for you to decide. But I will offer a few additional thoughts:

- Coming up with a good question is probably the hardest part of the assignment. It may take a while. Maybe you should browse through reference sources like the *Dictionary of American Biography* (ask the librarians for help with this or for other suggestions). Or browse through your parents’ bookshelves. Better yet, pretend to be interested in your parents’ lives. On a drive home one weekday afternoon, casually ask, “Say, Dad, if you could write a biography of anyone, who could it be?” And when he answers, ask something like “Okay, but just what is it, exactly, that you find so compelling about this person’s life?” Poke him a bit like I’m always poking you, but don’t get carried away by acting too interested, or he may get suspicious. But do it right and you might actually get a good suggestion.

Actually, you’ll probably find that your question evolves as you get into the project. You’ll learn things about the person that may answer one question and lead you to pose another. In fact, you might not really chisel down the question until relatively late in the game. That’s fine. A good essay is a journey – for you and your reader. An essay that begins with question like “How was Abraham Lincoln able to rise from obscurity to become one of the great figures of American history?” may end up as “How did working as a country lawyer in frontier Illinois allow Lincoln to deal with the morons he faced in the U.S. Congress?” (The thesis

“The motive is the trickiest part of an argument, but it’s also what gives an essay its kick, its vitality.”

that emerges from this question might even lead to a motive that has something to do with how we should deal with morons in the U.S. Congress today while we're waiting for you to finish law school.)

- However fascinating or complicated your journey turns out to be, you can only count on your reader to have patience for the condensed version of it, which should be laid out before the first paragraph of your essay is over. Indeed, the introduction of the essay will almost surely give you the most trouble, and will probably be the very last thing you work on before you hand it in. That's because the intro should have the whole package in miniature: question, thesis – and, ideally, a hint of the motive.
- The body of the essay is where most of your evidence will be. This is where you'll overview the person's life, marshal the relevant facts and quotes, etc. The crux to success here will be in the **topic sentences**: Essays are often won and lost in the trenches of topic sentences. What you *don't* want are sentences that listlessly recite facts: "And then Jane Addams went to college." What you *do* want are sentences that *fuse* fact and interpretation in ways that advance the argument: "Scholars agree that Addams's college years were pivotal in forming her social convictions." Subsequent sentences would then describe just where she went to college, what those convictions were and why there were important to what she went on to do.

Note the implied flow in a sentence like "Scholars agree that Addams's college years were pivotal in forming her social convictions. One can almost feel the previous paragraph on her childhood, and the ensuing one, which should be about her early career. And a phrase like "scholars agree" suggests you've actually looked into the matter (which you'll need to follow up on by citing your sources. You're also suggesting that you agree with those sources even as you also suggest that you have an independent mind who may in fact depart from the conventional wisdom somewhere down the line. The more of these kinds of things you can do, the more vigorous your essay will be.

- The conclusion of the essay is typically the home of the motive. That's because motives are typically in effect the moral of the story, and you generally have to tell the story first before you get to the moral. But the very best essays will also thread the motive through the essay: hint at it in the intro, and subtly suggest it through the body. An intro that has ends with a sentence like, "The role of Jordan's history teacher in his success on the court is not only an inspiring story of a young man's triumph, but also an object lesson about the kinds of steps we need to take to preserve precious natural resources in our nation's classrooms," will leave a reader wanting to know more. You'll hint at more when you use language like "all too rare," "utterly indispensable" and "endangered" when you describe that teacher in the body of the essay, and offer a payoff in the conclusion, where you'll outline your proposal to pay high school history teachers as

“Essays are often won and lost in the trenches of topic sentences.”

much as Division I NCAA basketball coaches. (And though the logic of such an argument may be elusive to some readers, I can promise you it will get VERY serious consideration from me. And you know how serious I am when I make such a promise.)

Is what I'm asking you to do difficult? Oh boy, is it ever. This is the kind of skill that takes years to master, and it's very unlikely you'll meet the standards I've set out here. But that's OK; I want you to have something to shoot for – not just for this essay, for this school year, but for years to come.

In any event, I hope these pointers are of some help as you head off on your journey. No doubt they will be of limited assistance. But I'll be around to help. And if all goes well, when I'm gone, you'll still have an annoying little voice in your head that says things like "All right, but what's your motive?" Or, "Watch your topic sentences!" And "What kind of title is 'Jordan Makes History – and History Makes Jordan?'"

“Is what I’m asking you to do difficult? Oh boy, is it ever.”

“But that’s OK; I want you to have something to shoot for . . .”

Jordan Makes History – and History Makes Jordan

There's no obvious relationship between one's prowess in the classroom and on the basketball court. To be sure, there have been plenty of star athletes who have also been star students, but as often as not the two variables are completely independent. When they do overlap, it's only logical to ask what the relationship might be, and nowhere does this question seem more pressing than in the case of Michael Jordan. Jordan, as just about every living American knows, was one of the best basketball players – one of the best athletes – in American history. Many factors went into his excellence: pure talent, hard work, more than a little luck. But was there anything else one can point to? As a matter of fact, there is. What most people don't know about Jordan is that it was his tenth grade U.S. History teacher, Ms. Felicia Divine, who played a crucial role in his development. "I couldn't have done it without her," Jordan himself said flatly when he returned to his old school in 2005 to pay tribute to Divine, who's 4'11". "She taught me things that made all the difference, and you'd be surprised by how many of my teammates would say the same thing about their history teachers." One can't help but wonder how many more Michael Jordans there would be if there weren't more Felicia Divines.

- The story of Jordan's journey to the athletic greatness began in 19xx . . .
- It was in high school that he met Divine.
- Divine's contribution clearly went beyond teaching about the Founding Fathers....
- Some have had trouble accepting her role "I'm sorry, that's so ridiculous..."
- "No, she's made al the difference," Jordan affirmed. Some numbers bear him out
- What does this all mean? For Jordan, the consequences have been unmistakable . . .

But there's a broader lesson here too, a lesson about what we need to do for our history teachers.

IV. MR. MEYERS' HANDY DANDY OUTLINE OF ESSAY FORM

Review of Essay Form

Cover Page -

Should have a title of essay that encapsulates thesis in a provocative manner (centered). Your name, your teacher's, the course title, and the date should be listed in a column several lines below the title and offset to the right. Avoid busy or cartoony fonts. Stay simple and be sure to spell the teacher's name correctly (!)

Introduction-

Opener- "zinger" or "teaser" that grabs your reader while introducing your topic

Background- provides the general information (names, dates, definitions) necessary to understand the thesis

Thesis- a coherent, defensible argument that can be proved or disproved and a "road map" to your essay. Remember to answer the "so what" question (motive)

Body-

should consist of well-constructed paragraphs, with clear topic sentences (arguments that make your thesis argument), factual support, quotations, analysis and transitions. Footnotes or endnotes required (see below)

Conclusion-

Restatement- a return to the thesis in more sophisticated and provocative presentation

Expansion- answers the "so what" question, establishes relevance and significance

Bibliography-

Lists all books used for research alphabetically by author's last name

Overall Structure

The structure of a classic, three-part essay is straightforward: Introduction, Body, Conclusion. The Introduction, well, introduces the topic, provides the background necessary to understand the thesis argument, and then lays out the argument itself, in abbreviated form. The Body is where the action is, breaking the thesis argument into smaller topics that can be arranged in a logical order and proven with analytical arguments, both original and borrowed, as well as historical evidence. The Conclusion permits a more sophisticated restatement of the thesis and an opportunity to expand upon the thesis, to suggest the general relevance and importance of your argument, and to answer the question “So what?”

The Introduction

The introduction should engage your reader, set out the general topic, and provide the core argument, or thesis, of your essay. In a legal trial, the introduction would be the equivalent of the opening statement. It is composed of three parts:

The opening line or “zinger”: The “zinger” should engage the reader with a catchy phrase that relates to your topic. For example, a paper on Lincoln and the Civil War might begin: “Abraham Lincoln may not have actually built a log cabin with his bare hands, but he rebuilt the divided house that was America.”

Background: Move directly from your opening into the background necessary to understand your argument. Supply the who, what, when, and where as succinctly as possible. Introduce your topic and provide a smooth segue (transition) to your thesis statement.

Thesis and “Road Map”: A good thesis is invaluable. Your thesis should conclude your introduction by setting out the argument you will make, the point you will prove, in the body of your essay. A thesis must be an argument that can be proved or disproved. It is a statement that is not obvious, but true. “Washington was our first president” is not a thesis because it cannot be disproved. It is self-evident. “Washington was a good president” is better, although “good” is too vague to be argued. “Washington was among our most effective presidents because he saw the advantages of consolidating presidential power yet avoided the trappings of monarchy” is even better, as it is arguable, provable, and specific. The thesis should not only set out a point to be proven, but also lay out a “road map” for how you will go about proving it. If your essay topic were “the French and American Revolutions,” a good thesis might be,

“The opening line or ‘zinger’: The ‘zinger’ should engage the reader with a catchy phrase that relates to your topic. For example, a paper on Lincoln and the Civil War might begin: ‘Abraham Lincoln may not have actually built a log cabin with his bare hands, but he rebuilt the divided house that was America.’”

The American Revolution succeeded in establishing a sound democratic republic, while the French Revolution failed, because the social, economic and political “soil” in America permitted democracy to take root, while that in France was infertile. The English colonies were characterized by social mobility, economic opportunity, and a tradition of political liberty, but the revolutionaries in France inherited a feudal social structure, widespread poverty, and absolutist politics. Thus, despite their ostensible similarities, the two revolutions were predestined by history to take divergent paths.

Such a thesis would require background that describes the two revolutions, in brief, and identifies some similarities (who, what, when, etc.). In providing the “because” or the “how and why,” you should set up, or preview, the topic sentences of the major sections of your essay. This is your “road map,” in which your topic sentences for the body are laid out in the thesis itself. Finally, your thesis should identify the significance of your argument, why it is interesting or important. This is the “so what” question or “motive.” Why should we care?

“The topic sentence is like a mini-thesis, setting out the point of the paragraph by exploring one part of the overall thesis.”

The Body

The body of your essay is where you make your case. To continue the trial analogy, the body would be where you provide evidence by interrogating witnesses and putting exhibits into the record. The classic essay has three body sections, organized from weakest to strongest (with variations), or chronologically, or thematically, or comparatively, depending upon the needs of the topic. You may want to begin your body section with a counter-argument that you refute, so as to convince your audience that you have addressed all sides of the issue. Each section may have more than one paragraph. Each paragraph should contain a topic sentence, evidence, discussion and analysis, and a transition:

The topic sentence is like a mini-thesis, setting out the point of the paragraph by exploring one part of the overall thesis. If your thesis involved a comparison of the French and American Revolutions, one paragraph might begin with a topic sentence on the perceived absence of social distinctions in America, as opposed to the hierarchical structure of French society.

Evidence/ Support: The biggest job of your essay is research, collecting the historical material to help make your case. These could include “facts,” such as dates, events, periods, movements, philosophies. You will find these in reference works, such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, biographical encyclopedias, etc. But to really learn about a period or event, you will have to explore both primary and secondary sources. The former could include: newspaper accounts, diaries, paintings, photos, advertisements, speeches, letters, minutes, declarations, manifestos, songs, poems, contemporary

books, tracts, etc. Such primary sources are key, as they provide the historical legitimacy for your argument. They are the “eyewitness testimony” of your case. Secondary sources are like “expert testimony,” giving your own original argument credibility by showing that some really experienced eggheads agree with you. Such sources could include: academic books, monographs, dissertations, articles, later fiction, etc. When you find a source that is very compelling or useful, you should quote it directly, otherwise you should paraphrase. In any case, footnote (see footnote section, below).

Discussion/ Analysis: The evidence needs your help! Don’t leave it hanging out there in the cold. Discuss and explain the significance of the evidence you have chosen. How does the “Declaration of Independence” illustrate the Commonwealth tradition of Great Britain? Pretend (as hard as it might be) that your reader is a bit dim and needs to be walked through the evidence. Connect the dots between the evidence and your thesis. Remember the trial analogy and never overestimate the jury.

The transition sentence: should sum up the paragraph’s point and provide a smooth transition to the topic sentence of the next paragraph or section.

The Conclusion

Your audience (or jury) has traveled with you through at least three body sections in which you have laid out a cogent argument supported by facts and convincingly supported opinions. In your conclusion you provide the “summation” or “closing arguments” that restate your thesis argument in more sophisticated terms. Then you are free to expand upon the thesis to show its relevance to today or its usefulness in answering other important historical questions.

Thesis restatement: You can now offer a more subtle and nuanced, or more provocative, version of your thesis, because the jury now knows what you knew when you devised your thesis in the first place. Include a very succinct summary of your evidence.

Expansion: While avoiding excessive hyperbole (exaggeration), you should permit yourself to go a bit wild in the expansion. Here is where you can directly address the “so what” question. So, Washington was an effective president, “so what?” The American Revolution succeeded while the French failed, “who gives?” Tell us why your answer to the thesis question is significant for subsequent history, and/or for today. What does it tell us about current society? The political process? The human condition? Here is your chance to editorialize, a bit. Go for it.

*“Discussion/
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cold. Discuss
and explain the
significance of the
evidence you have
chosen.”*

Points to Bear in Mind

These are suggestions culled from comments teachers frequently make on students' work:

General Practical Hints (in no particular order):

- A research essay is neither a report nor a list, but “a composition on a particular theme or subject — generally analytic, speculative, or interpretive” (Random House Dictionary).
- Have fun and make your own voice audible, but do not use the first person (“I”).
- Avoid using the passive voice (“the Mona Lisa was made by Leonardo”).
- Avoid double negatives, colloquialisms, and listing ideas without discussing them.
- Avoid choppy sentences. Use clauses to vary your sentence structure and create “flow.”
- Do not use section headings in a short essay (your topic sentences should be enough), but do provide extra line spaces between sections (“section breaks”).

“Avoid choppy sentences. Use clauses to vary your sentence structure and create ‘flow.’”

Form:

- Be sure to double-space.
- Please put page numbers at the bottom of the pages (but not on the cover page or first page of the text; start numbering on page 2).
- When you cite a book in the text, please italicize the title.
- Please save your rough drafts as many teachers ask you to turn in your rough draft with your final draft.

Paragraphing:

- Each paragraph (¶) should cover one idea, stated in the topic sentence at or near the start of the ¶.
- Test each sentence in your head. Does it belong in this ¶?
- When you switch ¶s, ask yourself: Is there a reason for switching? Am I moving on to another idea?
- Be sure that each ¶ is complete. Think of a ¶ as a mini-essay: its topic sentence is an “intro,” the ideas, examples, quotes, and specific analyses constitute the “body,” and the transition is a “conclusion” (but one that points toward the next topic).
- Be sure that your ¶ flows, that your sentences are not choppy or list-like.

Quotations:

- Primary-source quotations (i.e., from the period you are discussing) should always be introduced and discussed. Who said it, when, and why? What is its significance?
- Secondary-source quotes (i.e., from historians or later observers) should be used only if you cannot say what they say as well as they do. Otherwise paraphrase concisely and footnote the idea.

-
- If the quote is more than three lines, then indent the whole quote and remove the quotation marks.
 - Always introduce, analyze, discuss, and/or explain your quotes (do not end a ¶ with a quote).

Use of Specifics:

- When you see comments such as “vague,” “specify,” “explain,” “evidence,” etc., please add the who, what, when, where, and especially why of your idea.
- Choose a city, person, work of art, or event from history that supports your idea.
- “God is in the details.”

“God is in the details.”

In thinking practically about your paragraphs, you should:

Not exceed seven sentences in your paragraph. Remember, a paragraph develops one idea.

Vary the types of sentences you use for each sentence. You should make a conscious effort to think about how why you are using a certain type of sentence as you progress through the development of your main idea. I would suggest that you save this part of the process until the final proofreading of your paper.

Only use variations of the verbs “to be” (is, was) and “to have” (has, had) twice in a paragraph. You should find a way to use active verbs in every other sentence.

Write down your topic sentence. You should think about whether or not your topic sentence is a viable argument or just an observation. Think: does it present the significance of the idea to be discussed, or does it just present a retelling of some plot element?

Identify the key words in your topic sentence. Think: what are the words in the sentence that will guide your development of this argument for a particular paragraph? Once you write down the key words, on a separate piece of paper write two or three sentences of explanation about why you think these words are important.

Explain in five sentences why the idea presented in your topic sentence is significant to the character/theme/event discussed. Then go to your textual support--which is the best support based on the main idea of your paragraph? Why?

Use your observations from the previous section in constructing your body paragraph. You have all of the components: a topic sentence, a discussion of the significance of your topic sentence and textual support. Now you must organize the paragraph so that the development of your topic sentence progresses logically from beginning to end.

Ideally, you should also remember:

Avoid using the words “things”, “people”, “you”, “I”, “someone”, “something”. Precision!! Is there a more precise word choice you could have engaged? Your topic sentences must be specific. More precision!!

To be vigilant that you are not repeating ideas you have already established. You must proofread your work to make sure that, for example, sentence #5 is not just a rephrasing or restating of sentence #3. GO BACK AND REREAD

“You should think about whether or not your topic sentence is a viable argument or just an observation. Think: does it present the significance of the idea to be discussed, or does it just present a retelling of some plot element?”

YOUR WORK. If you find repetition, take it out. Use the vacancy left by the repetitive sentence to construct another sentence which allows you to progress further in your development of the topic sentence.

****When I look at the paragraphs within your essay, this list is my rubric. You should consult this list as you are writing your paragraphs****

VI. WRITING A DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTION ESSAY- MR. MEYERS

Some students have come to dread Document Based Questions (DBQs) because they are often used for testing. But why do we use DBQs? The goal of the DBQ is to put you, the student, in the position of being a historian. The only difference between what a student does in a DBQ and what a historian does in a book, is that you have sources supplied by a teacher, while the historian must go out and find her own. In a DBQ, a teacher may have chosen the texts and provided a question/statement, but you must establish an original thesis argument and use the documents, your knowledge of history and your ability synthesize the two to support your thesis.

Preparing for a DBQ

DBQs may be used as homeworks, tests or to generate class discussion, but, however they may be used, the preparation is the same. Begin by studying the historical context. Using as an example the DBQ “**Was the Cold War a Product of Paranoia?**” from Mr. Meyers *US Since 1940* Document Reader, Unit One, you would begin by researching the origins of the cold war: US-Soviet relations at the end of World War II, the Yalta and Potsdam conferences, the fall of the “iron curtain,” the Truman Doctrine, etc. The biggest unknown for you in doing a DBQ is how much you know about the historical context. The other ways to prepare for DBQs are to establish good skills. The first skill you need is the capacity to read primary sources and glean as much information from them as possible. Who is the speaker? What is your point of view? How does your tone suggest your biases? For whom is the quote intended? What is the author’s politics? — Prepare by practicing reading between the lines when you study primary sources in class or for homework. The next skill is essay writing. In all your written work, practice creating clear thesis statements, using coherent organization, providing topic sentences, historical support, quotes and thorough analysis. (see above for tips on essay form). Finally, an important skill is making an argument. The best DBQs do not list or describe, but *explain*. Practice the art of making compelling arguments in debates and discussions and homework.

“The thesis, not the documents, should drive the essay.”

Establishing an argument

The most common mistake students make when approaching a DBQ is to begin writing too soon. Read the question and instructions carefully. Some DBQs supply a statement that asks for a response, others a question and others merely ask you to recount a particular narrative from history. In all cases, you should write down a provisional response/answer/ argument based on your own knowledge *before* looking at the documents. The reason for this is to remember that you are creating an original argument to explain a historical phenomenon, *not* stitching a set of documents together. *The thesis, not the documents, should drive the essay.* That said, you must accommodate the documents that have been provided. Therefore, after jotting down a

provisional thesis, you should quickly peruse the documents and adjust your argument to use the sources effectively. Indeed, a survey of the documents may show you that you have misinterpreted the question/statement and must adjust your argument considerably. This is a dialectical process between your answer and the sources. After looking at the documents, establish a thesis that addresses the statement. You may agree or disagree with the statement, in whole or in part. Whatever position you take, be sure to address the who, what, when and especially the *why* in your response. Be sure to address the counter-argument, what historians might say in opposition to your thesis.

Planning the essay

Before you start writing, make a quick outline. A sketch outline is invaluable. The outline serves several purposes. First, an outline permits you to plan which points to support with documents, which with outside factual material and which with both. Second, an outline permits you to pace your writing in a timed situation. Third, it helps you keep track of you arguments as you write and to remember which sources and factual support you planned to apply in which sections (hopefully avoiding the “asterisk and arrow” phenomenon when you realize you have omitted an important point and must squeeze it in the margins or on the back of the paper!). At the same time it is important to limit the time you spend on the sketch outline. You should spend no more than 2-3 minutes on an outline for a 45-50 minute test. The introduction should include some *brief* background to the question, definitions of terms used in the thesis, the counter-argument and thesis. Quickly check that your topic sentences for each paragraph all connect to the thesis, that you will use a sufficient number of the sources provided (at least 4) and that you will also demonstrate mastery of the historical period(s).

Letting the argument lead

The most common mistake in writing DBQ essays is to begin paragraphs with the phrase: “In Document B.” *Do not to list documents* but, rather, let your thesis drive the organization. Each paragraph should have a topic sentence that connects back to the thesis statement and advances the argument in a logical fashion (See essay form, below). One test you may use is the “three sentence test:” There should be no mention of a specific document until at least three sentences into the paragraph. Use documents only in the service of an argument, as evidence. The goal is not to explain each document, but to construct a narrative that uses quotes or paraphrases from the documents as support.

Using the documents

Some students will make a point and then say, “as can be seen in Document C,” without showing the reader *how* the document supports the point. You should show exactly how the document supports or advances you argument. This is the central task of the whole DBQ process. But there are a few ways to do this. You may paraphrase the

“You should show exactly how the document supports or advances you argument. This is the central task of the whole DBQ process.”

document, using your own words to distill the meaning of the author or speaker. This is particularly necessary with visual documents, such as paintings, that require verbal representation and explication. You cannot “quote” a painting, therefore, put what you think the painter intended in your own words. Paraphrasing is also appropriate when you feel you can say what the author has said more efficiently or effectively. After paraphrasing, you should still then *explain* the significance of the document and show how it relates to your own argument or story.

Another strategy is to quote from the document. This is often the most effective way to use DBQ sources, as it shows that you have read the material carefully and that the support for your argument is in the actual documents. But it is not necessary to quote the *full* document. Choose only the sections that are relevant to the argument you are making at that moment. Use ellipses, those three periods that denote the removal of sections of the quote, but do not change the meaning of the quotation in the process. You may also combine paraphrasing and direct quotation, condensing more turgid sections but pulling out pithy quotes for effect.

Finally, it is crucial that you establish a system for citation. The most effective system I have found is to introduce the quote or paraphrase by identifying the author and title, i.e. (returning to the Cold War DBQ)

In his now famous ‘Long Telegram,’ of 1946 (Document G), diplomat and Soviet expert George Kennan argues that...

Placing this information (author, author’s position, title, date and document letter) in the text is the most fluid and professional manner to cite in a DBQ, but there are many strategies for including such information. If the flow of the paragraph requires it, another approach is:

George Kennan argues that “At bottom of Kremlin’s neurotic view of world affairs is traditional and instinctive Russian sense of insecurity” (Document G, George Kennan, The Long Telegram, 1946).

There are several ways of including such information. As long as the document letter, author, author’s position, document title and date are included, and you are consistent, the form of the citation is not critically important.

Using Historical Information

Using historical support is as important as using the documents provided. You are expected to bring factual context to the DBQ essay from your own experience. Dates, names, definitions, secondary source interpretations, ideas from class discussion--- all are necessary to place the documents in a historical and conceptual context. It is important for

“But it is not necessary to quote the full document. Choose only the sections that are relevant to the argument you are making at that moment.”

you to demonstrate your mastery of the actual history. Thus, using the example from the previous paragraph, if you are using a document from George Kennan it would be important to supply a brief account of his career as a diplomat and Soviet expert in Moscow, possibly an account of the Popular Front, of the Yalta and Potsdam conferences, and the chilling of relations between the US and USSR with the end of World War II and the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This context, along with your own analysis, is what permits the documents to speak to the DBQ question or statement.

Good Essay Form

The DBQ essay is first and foremost an *essay*. As such, it must follow the rules for essays.

Here are some other tips you might find useful:

TIPS FOR STUDENTS FOR THE DBQ:

1. Use a black pen.
2. Remember that you have time to plan, so don't panic.
3. Read the question and note the time period. Do not include information unless it fits chronologically or is directly relevant to your argument.
4. List all the information about the time period that you can recall-- events, names, terms, etc.
5. Write a thesis sentence on top of a scratch sheet of paper. Make sure that it directly answers the DBQ question or responds to the DBQ statement.
6. Now, look at the documents and try to decide how you will use them to support your thesis. If your thesis does not accommodate the documents provided then adjust your thesis accordingly. Think about why a teacher might have included each document.
7. Outline your essay, remembering good essay form and topic sentences.
8. Each document does different things, so try to use a variety of documents.
9. Analyze the documents. Why are they significant? What do they show? Do not quote extensively from them, but do include short quotes when appropriate.
10. Link brief descriptions to the names you use. For example: Alexander Stephens, a Whig senator from Georgia, noted in the Southern Literary Journal (document C) that...
11. Coverage of the documents is important, but the inclusion of outside information is critical. Strive for balance, demonstrating that you can read closely, but also have some outside knowledge.

“Do not include information unless it fits chronologically or is directly relevant to your argument.”

12. A possible approach: Write an introductory paragraph setting the scene and demonstrating that you have some outside knowledge. Then state your thesis clearly and directly, before moving on to support it with a nice balance of specific information from both the documents and outside sources. Conclude with a brief restatement of your thesis and a discussion of the significance of your answer for later history.

Plagiarism involves claiming someone else's writing or ideas as your own. It is intellectual theft. It is therefore important to note that much of this section is based on material produced by an anonymous author in the History Department of Concord Academy.

Plagiarism may be straightforward and obvious: taking a friend's essay and claiming you wrote it; copying an answer from a neighbor's test; using an important idea for a paper and pretending you thought it up. Plagiarism can also be more subtle. For example, copying parts of a paragraph in an article and incorporating it into your own writing without quotation marks or a citation is plagiarism. It is not enough to just change a word or two here and there, either; using someone else's ideas and sentence structure still amounts to plagiarism.

The fact that the originator of the writing or idea knows that it is being used does not mean it is not plagiarism. The reader does not know, and that is where the problem lies. The reader, user, or viewer attributes something to the author that should not be attributed to him or her.

Plagiarism may be conscious or unconscious. Conscious plagiarism includes knowingly taking another person's work or ideas and trying to receive credit for them. Unconscious plagiarism involves borrowing another person's work innocently, without realizing you have done so. For example, sometimes particularly appropriate words and phrases may fix themselves in our minds and reappear later when we have forgotten that we did not create them. This is the hardest kind of plagiarism for the writer to detect and avoid, and it is one of the reasons why it is important to keep excellent notes when you are doing research. Be sure that you take down all the bibliographical information as you start to take notes, so that you can easily compile your footnotes and bibliography later.

You may think that someone has said, thought, or written everything before, so why isn't everything plagiarism? This is a difficult problem to resolve, so always try to put your own personal stamp on everything you write. It may help you to think of DNA. DNA is made of only four different building blocks, but each of us has an arrangement of DNA that is unique in the history of the universe and will never appear again. Given the diversity of materials we have to work with in terms of information, experience, and language, we should all be able to produce truly unique work.

What is wrong with plagiarism? For one thing, the entire purpose of your education is defeated when you take the easy way out and use the results of someone else's efforts. Clearly, original thought at all times is as impossible as perfect memory; that is why you can get help from others if you acknowledge

“The fact that the originator of the writing or idea knows that it is being used does not mean it is not plagiarism. The reader does not know, and that is where the problem lies.”

that help by using citations. But where deep thought and good memory are part of the exercise, you cheat yourself and cheapen your education by appropriating someone else's work as your own.

In any case, if you are in doubt, avoid even the suspicion of plagiarism. Cite the work, or ask your teacher for guidance in advance, while your work is still in the formative stages. Finished work that includes plagiarism will result in failing grades and possible disciplinary action.

VIII. CITATIONS: FOOTNOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

The point of references is to help the interested reader find your sources and to credit others when you use their ideas. If no example seems to match your particular source, just do your best — give information that you think will be useful to others, and be consistent. You can also check *The Chicago Manual of Style* (see References) for many, many more examples.

When to footnote:

- Quotations
- Figures and statistics
- When paraphrasing any opinion that is not your own
- When stating a controversial idea that is not your own
- When using a fact that is not common knowledge, but the result of one person's research
- When you wish to state information that is interesting but would break the flow of your paper
- To mention works that pursue an argument further

How to footnote:

- Place a number in superscript at the end of the quote, passage, or fact you wish to footnote.
- Place the same number in superscript at the bottom of the page (footnote) or in a list at the end of your essay (endnote).
- Type out the citation (source) following the examples below.

General Form – Footnotes and Bibliography:

- If you have an easy footnote program then, use it.
- The form for a footnote is: author's first name and last name, book title in italics, then in parenthesis, place of publication followed by a colon, publisher, date of publication, end parenthesis, p. [page #] of material being referenced.
- Bibliographic form: author's last name, first name. book title in italics, place of publication, publisher, date of publication.
- The bibliography should list the books alphabetically by author's last name.

Standard Form for Footnotes and Bibliographies

Note: The information in a note and a bibliography is essentially the same, but the punctuation is different, as is the order of the author's names. The note resembles a "sentence" (only one period), and the author's name is first name then last name. With the bibliography, the information is presented in chunks, each separated by a period, and the author's name is inverted because the entries need to be alphabetized by author.

“The information in a note and a bibliography is essentially the same, but the punctuation is different, as is the order of the author's names.”

Titles:

Titles of works — books, plays, movies, paintings, journals (periodicals), etc. — are set off with italics or underlining. Titles of short works — articles or other short pieces within a collection (e.g., a song from a show, a poem) — are set off with quotation marks. Subtitles are separated from main titles by a colon.

Specific Forms for Footnotes:

Book:

Sasha Rolon, *In Praise of Punctuality: How Never to Be Late* (New York: Harper & Row, 1995), pp. 129-31.

Article in a periodical:

Michael Benowitz, “The Role of Flanking Infantry in the Battle of Chickamauga, 1862–1863,” *Military Digest* (April, 1994), p. 33–36.

Note: In college, you’ll be asked to cite the volume and issue numbers as well as the date for periodicals.

Essay in an edited collection:

Lily McNeil, “The Role of the Federal Government in Terrorism,” in Marc Velez and Robert Roskin, eds., *Don’t Tread on Me: The Rise of the Militia Movement in America* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1995), pp. 666–77.

Same source immediately following the previous reference:

Ibid., p. 679.

[[Ibid. is the abbreviation for “ibidem,” which means “in the same place” in Latin; p. is the abbreviation for “page,” pp. for “pages.”]]

Second reference of previously named source (use short title):

Rolon, *In Praise*, p. 49.

Specific Forms for Bibliographies:

Bibliographies are arranged in alphabetical order by author. Again, note the differences in order and punctuation between a footnote and a bibliographic entry.

Rolon, Sasha. *In Praise of Punctuality: How Never to Be Late*. New York: Harper and Row, 1995.

*“Bibliographies
are arranged in
alphabetical order
by author.”*

Another book by the same author:

----- . *The Law and Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday and Sons, 1994. [[That's six hyphens in a row.]]

A book by two authors:

Strunk, William, Jr., and E.B. White. *The Elements of Style*, 2nd ed. New York: Macmillan, 1972.

Organization as "author":

International Monetary Fund. *Surveys of African Economies*. Vol. 7, *Algeria, Mali, Morocco, and Tunisia*. Washington, D.C.: International Monetary Fund, 1977.

Citing Internet Sources:

The following examples are drawn from the *MLA Style Webpage*. Modern Language Association. 21 March 2000 <http://www.mla.org/style/style_top_index.htm> Another good source is Page, Melvin E. *A Brief Citation Guide For Internet Sources In History And The Humanities (Version 2.1)*. 21 March 2000 <<http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~africa/citation.html>>

- Scholarly Project:

Victorian Women Writers Project. Ed. Perry Willett. Apr. 1997. Indiana U. 26 Apr. 1997 <<http://www.indiana.edu/~letrs/vwwp/>>.

- Professional Site:

Portuguese Language Page. U of Chicago. 1 May 1997 <<http://humanities.uchicago.edu/romance/port/>>.

- Personal Site:

Lancashire, Ian. Home page. 1 May 1997 <<http://www.chass.utoronto.ca:8080/~ian/index.html>>.

- Book:

Nesbit, E[dith]. *Ballads and Lyrics of Socialism*. London, 1908. Victorian Women Writers Project. Ed. Perry Willett. Apr. 1997. Indiana U. 26 Apr. 1997 <<http://www.indiana.edu/~letrs/vwwp/nesbit/ballsoc.html>>.

- Poem:

Nesbit, E[dith]. "Marching Song." *Ballads and Lyrics of Socialism*. London, 1908. Victorian Women Writers Project. Ed. Perry Willett. Apr. 1997. Indiana U. 26 Apr. 1997 <<http://www.indiana.edu/~letrs/vwwp/nesbit/ballsoc.html#p9>>.

- Article in a Reference Database:

"Fresco." *Britannica Online*. Vers. 97.1.1. Mar. 1997. Encyclopaedia Britannica. 29 Mar. 1997 <<http://www.eb.com:180>>.

- Article in a Journal:

Flanagan, Roy. "Reflections on Milton and Ariosto." *Early Modern Literary Studies* 2.3 (1996):16 pars. 22 Feb. 1997 <<http://unixg.ubc.ca:7001/0/e-sources/emls/02-3/flanmilt.html>>.

- Article in a Magazine:

Landsburg, Steven E. "Who Shall Inherit the Earth?" *Slate* 1 May 1997. 2 May 1997 <<http://www.slate.com/Economics/97-05-01/Economics.asp>>.

- Work from a Subscription Service:

Koretz, Gene. "Economic Trends: Uh-Oh, Warm Water." *Business Week* 21 July 1997: 22. Electric Lib.Sam Barlow High School Lib., Gresham, OR. 17

Oct.1997 <<http://www.elibrary.com/>>.

“Table Tennis.” Compton’s Encyclopedia Online. Vers. 2.0. 1997. America Online. 4 July 1998. Keyword: Compton’s.

- Posting to a Discussion List:

Merrian, Joanne. “Spinoff: Monsterpiece Theatre.” Online posting. 30 Apr. 1994. Shaksper: The GlobalElectronic Shakespeare Conf. 27 Aug. 1997 <http://www.arts.ubc.ca/english/iemls/shak/MONSTERP_SPINOFF.txt>.

Common errors in footnoting

It’s one thing to know when to document your sources; it’s another to actually do so correctly. Here are some common errors:

- **Half naked footnotes.**

This is when you cite a source, but fail to provide enough information. Very often, this happens when students use MLA style (the kind of documentation often used in English courses) but then fail to add a bibliography.

“In a recent survey, 89% of students failed to footnote properly.” (Smith, 76).

Unless you explain *which* book from *which* Smith, such a citation doesn’t do much good. You *must* have a bibliography. If you use footnotes, you don’t need a bibliography, but it’s still common for students to fail to provide a complete set of information: author, title, place of publication, publisher, year and page number.

- **Overdressed footnotes.**

This occurs when you provide a complete citation again and again. After you cite a source once like this

Felicia Divine, *My Life at Fieldston* (New York: Riverdale Press, 2004), p. 1029.

. . you should abbreviate like this:

Divine, 666.

Or

Ibid, 999.

If the prolific Divine writes a two-volume memoir, you may need to abbreviate after a first full citation by using the title:

Divine, *More Life at Fieldston*, 8754.

- Footnote Mania. Some students seem to think they need to footnote every sentence for everything, including the color of the sky, in paragraphs that look like this.

George Bush was president of the United States when Divine attended Fielston.¹ Bush's father, also George Bush, had also been president.² And Fieldston was a very pretty school.³

¹ Felicia Divine, *My Life at Fieldston* (New York: Riverdale Press, 2004), p. 1029

² Felicia Divine, *My Life at Fieldston* (New York: Riverdale Press, 2004), p. 1030

³ Felicia Divine, *My Life at Fieldston* (New York: Riverdale Press, 2004), p. 1031.

The truth is, however, that none of these assertions require a footnote. And if they did – like a statement that George Bush once said on an aircraft carrier that he wished he had attended Fieldston, along with other remarks about tax cuts he made during a Fieldston graduation address, they could all be “batched” into one footnote at the end of the paragraph, with each source separated by a semicolon, like this:

Felicia Divine, *My Life at Fieldston* (New York: Riverdale Press, 2004), 1029-1031; George Bush, “If Only I Had Gone to Fieldston,” *The New York Times*, April 31, 2004, A1.

This is true even if the pages are not in sequence:

Divine, 54-119; 12-14; Bush, A39.

The most important thing you can do is exercise common sense. Think about what you would want to know about a person's sources, and try to include it.

“Some students seem to think they need to footnote every sentence for everything, including the color of the sky...”

REFERENCES FOR THIS TEXT

The Chicago Manual of Style, 14th ed. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 6th ed. Revised by John Grossman and Alice Bennett. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

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- MLA Style Webpage*. Modern Language Association. 21 March 2000 <http://www.mla.org/style/style_top_index.htm> Another good source is Page,
- Page, Melvin E. *A Brief Citation Guide For Internet Sources In History And The Humanities (Version 2.1)*. 21 March 2000 <<http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~africa/citation.html>>
- Crouse, Maurice *Citing electronic information in history papers*. 10 February 1996. <<http://www.people.memphis.edu/~crousem/elcite.txt>>.
- Walker, Janice R. *MLA-Style Citations of Internet Sources*. April 1995. <<http://www.cas.usf.edu/english/walker/mla.html>>.

IX. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND REVISION MEMOS
—MR. ROSENHOLTZ

Particularly in the case of papers written in stages and/or drafts, teachers sometimes ask students to reflect on the process after it's all done. Sometimes this is called an acknowledgments page or revision memo. Its purpose is twofold:

1. To cue a reader as to what changes took place to facilitate more rapid reading and assessment;
2. To afford an opportunity for a student to reflect on what was learned, reinforcing and consolidating any intellectual or methodological gains to be built on in future essays.

“A good revision memo is usually short, avoiding a blow-by-blow account of revisions in favor of distilled generalization (along with a couple specifics).”

A good revision memo is usually short, avoiding a blow-by-blow account of revisions in favor of distilled generalization (along with a couple specifics). It might look something like this:

As often happens with me, my argument didn't really come into focus until I wrote the conclusion of the first draft. I knew all along that I wanted to make my thesisist that Michael Jordan's history teacher played an important role in his career, but I didn't fully know how striking that role was until I lined up all the evidence. More importantly, I didn't really know why this all mattered – what my motive was – until I had written up the draft. I now see, and want my reader to see, that history teachers like her deserve to be much better paid. (See in particular that last paragraph on page six, and the final sentence of my introduction, where I hint at where I'll be headed.) I guess I have to thank my snotty little sister Jennifer, who asked “Who cares?” when I was telling my parents about this assignment about Michael Jordan. It was she who brought my argument into focus. My Mom suggested the title.

X. ESSAY WORK SHEETS, RUBRICS AND GRADERS

Essay Work Sheet: Thesis and Outline

		excellent	very good	good	poor	n/a	comment
Intro	topic/zinger						grabs reader
	background						who, what, where, when
	definitions						terms, movements, "isms"
	thesis						why, "so what," road map
Body							logical hierarchy
	topic sent.						connection to thesis
	specifics						dates, events, examples
	quotes						choice, use
	discussions						analysis
	transitions						
Concl.	restatement						
	expansion						"so what?" question
Insight Analysis							originality, critical inquiry, synthesis
Sources							selection and use

Comments:

Provisional grade (if this outline became an essay without significant changes):

DBQ/ Research Essay Grading Sheet

You are graded on seven categories:		
√ • x	Introduction	zinger, background (who, what, when, where), definitions, relevance, thesis (why, how, “so what”), “road map” to rest of essay
√ • x	Organization/ Structure	thesis-driven, topic sentences, paragraphing, transitions, logical flow
√ • x	Factual Support	relevance, selection, range of sources, dates, people, historical events
√ • x	Quotation Choice/Use	choice, use, introduction, analysis, discussion, format, relevance, citation
√ • x	Analysis and Argument	consistent thesis argument, addresses counter-argument, thorough discussions, original interpretation, use of secondary sources/ historiography
√ • x	Prose and Mechanics	prose, punctuation, word choice, colloquialisms, spelling, passive voice, capitals, vague antecedents, verb tense, agreement, sentence fragments, vague language
√ • x	Conclusion	restatement, expansion, answering the “so what” question (significance)

(√ = very good; • = satisfactory; x = unsatisfactory)

- A = If you fulfill all seven categories effectively, thoroughly, elegantly, and are utterly convincingly
- A- = If you fulfill all seven categories effectively and thoroughly
- B+ = If you fulfill six
- B = If you fulfill five
- B- = If you fulfill four

-
- C+ = If you fulfill three
 - C = If you fulfill two
 - C- = If you fulfill one
 - D = If you attempt to fulfill one

grade:	
--------	--

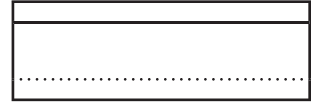
comment:

Essay Form and Correction Key

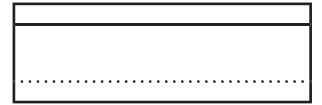
Introduction
 “Zinger”
 Background
 Thesis + Road Map: points A, B,+ C



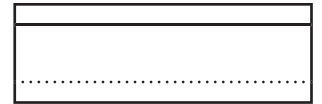
Body Paragraph “A”
 Topic Sentence “A”
 Evidence (quotes, dates, events)+ Analysis
 Transition to “B”



Body Paragraph “B”
 Topic Sentence “B”
 Evidence (quotes, dates, events)+ Analysis
 Transition to “C”



Body Paragraph “C”
 Topic Sentence “C”
 Evidence (quotes, dates, events)+ Analysis
 Transition to conclusion



Conclusion
 Restate Thesis (more fully)
 Expansion (“so what?”)



Correction Symbols

- WW wrong word (Choose a more appropriate word. Try a thesaurus.)
- NSW no such word (Choose a more appropriate word. Try a thesaurus.)
- AWK awkward word or phrase (Try a different word that fits the meaning of the sentence more closely.)
- ¶ insert paragraph (A new idea deserves a new ¶ .)
- ^ insert
- AA ambiguous antecedent (It is unclear to which noun the pronoun refers. Replace with proper noun.)
- VT faulty verb tense agreement (ie. shifting from past to present)
- TS topic sentence (Each TS should relate to your thesis and summarize the paragraph.)
- / lower case (ie. a capital with a diagonal line through it should become a lowercase)
- upper case (ie. “a” means it should be “A”)
- ✂ remove
- ~ unclear phrase
- UNC unclear idea
- ??? what the heck are you talking about?
- pt punctuation
- sp spelling
- qt quotation form (Indent, single-space and provide a citation of the source in the text or in a footnote.)
- cite citation (Provide a citation of the source for the quotation or idea.)
- coll colloquialism (ie, “Yo, Lincoln really dissed Jeff Davis, y’know”)
- frag sentence fragment (ie, “Entering the war for political reasons, not

moral ones.”)
passive passive voice (ie, change “The Constitution was written” to “the framers wrote the Comnstitution.”)
sig significance (what is the significance of this point?)
N reverse
 Δ change

XI. ESSAY RUBRIC- MS. STOKES

Analytical Rubric for Hawthorne Essays.

“High quality papers are persuasive and insightful from the opening paragraph to the conclusion. The writer has given considerable thought to the harmony of the paper; the very best papers present carefully constructed beginnings (thesis), middles (body paragraphs) and ends (synthesizing thoughts).”

High Quality (8; A): These high quality papers are persuasive and insightful from the opening paragraph to the conclusion. The writer has given considerable thought to the harmony of the paper; the very best papers present carefully constructed beginnings (thesis), middles (body paragraphs) and ends (synthesizing thoughts). The writer understands that the paragraph is the most important unit of composition, and suitably uses it in the development of single idea. They begin each paragraph with a sentence that raises expectations for the reader and fulfill those expectations in the sentences following. The important word here is “develop.” The paragraph must elaborate/explain/explore its key idea. The high quality paper also uses definite, concrete language in crafting its arguments about how Hawthorne’s aesthetics literally work in the passage or word chosen. The writer understands the importance of sentence variation, using simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences. The writer presents and integrates textual support from the stories with sophistication into their analysis. Finally, these papers are virtually flawless in terms of mechanics (no typos, misspellings, run-on sentences, no serious comma errors). Poor mechanics force a reader to reread a sentence or paragraph and that disrupts their concentration from your argument(s).

Medium High Quality (7; A-): Like the 8 paper, these medium high papers have moments of high intelligence and persuasive thinking. The writer has given solid thought to the harmony of the paper (thesis, body paragraphs, conclusion), but they also exhibit moments of disorganization in developing their argument(s) about Hawthorne’s aesthetics. These papers may tend to repeat their ideas on occasion, but they don’t ever engage in plot summary, so it is clear they are working to explore/explain the key words and phrases presented in their topic sentences. These papers also understand the value of wordplay to developing body paragraphs and varying their sentence structures with a rhythmic sophistication. Typos, misspellings and comma errors may happen in a few places, but not so much that it disrupts the pace and flow of the writer’s prose.

Low High Quality (6; B+): Like the 7 and 8 papers, these low high papers have moments of high intelligence and persuasive thinking. The writer has also given solid thought to the harmony of the paper (thesis, body paragraphs and conclusion), but there are moments where the writer’s topic sentences don’t quite establish a position and fall into vague generalizations about aesthetics rather than specific observations about the passage or word chosen. Of course, this impacts the structure of body paragraphs, which are the core of development within the essay. Textual support from the stories is used fairly well, but the writer may not always fully interrogate the language of the quotation in order to integrate it into their analysis. The writer does a solid

job of choosing nouns and verbs, particularly active verbs, to communicate meaning. Like the 7 and 8 papers, sentence variation is executed well; there may be some mechanical errors, but not so many as to disrupt the meaning of the essay.

Medium (5-4; B/B-): Medium papers fall into a similar bracket, but there are details that distinguish them, so please read on. The thesis statements of 5 papers are simply stronger; they are relatively supportable, and articulate a position, though they still need to work on elaborating it further. The thesis in a 4 paper is halfway between presenting a position and brainstorming—it isn't yet quite sure how it precisely wants to state itself. As a result, the introductions of 4 papers tend to lapse into vague language and/or repeat the opening sentence in different formations. The introductions of 5 papers are slightly more focused and able to open up to the development of ideas, rather than repetition.

For both papers, writers encounter difficulty in searching their thesis (for reasons stated above) for key words and phrases that would help them develop topic sentences for subsequent paragraphs. What does this mean practically? A medium paper that does not thoroughly pay attention to its thesis will present a very limited analysis of aesthetics in Hawthorne's stories and cannot adequately trace the development of a character/theme/idea. Medium papers will be tentative and not use the text sufficiently to support the argument/thesis, for example, not exploring key words and phrases from the text, placing quotations within the essay and neglecting to engage their significance, or just not thinking holistically about all of the places in the passage, or with the word chosen, where their thesis is relevant. There might also be an inordinate amount of plot summary instead of further developing their ideas in each paragraph. 4 papers tend to become more repetitive than 5 papers as the reader progresses through the essay. Paragraphs may form a block of text, because the writer does not understand paragraph development; there might be three separate ideas in one paragraph. While not deliberately meaning to be bland, the writer of the medium paper has not truly considered their use of language (specific nouns and active verbs) in communicating meaning. Sentences are predictable, in that they do not exhibit variation and are largely of the same length. Mechanical errors may be more rampant here than in the 6-7, and they have the ability to potentially disrupt the meaning of the essay.

Medium Low (3; C+): Medium Low papers are similar in some respects to the 5-4 papers above, but there are details that distinguish them. There is definitely an effort at articulating some type of an argument, but these papers go one of two ways: 1. A 3 paper may not have paid close attention to the parameters of the assignment, so instead of a close reading of style, they present an analysis of the plot and content in the story. 2. A 3 paper could be attempting to articulate an original idea, but they haven't fully thought

“Medium papers will be tentative and not use the text sufficiently to support the argument/thesis, for example, not exploring key words and phrases...”

it through as much as is necessary. As a result, the paper reads more like the pre-write the writer should have done for the essay. For both, there is an incredibly limited reading of the stories in terms of textual support—the writer hasn't fully considered all the evidence the text offers their argument. The writer may not fully consider word choice; there may be an alarming amount of "is's", "was's", "were's", "have's", "something's", "people" and there may be a lack of care in how the material is presented, grammatically and mechanically. These writers should consult the previous criteria and seriously consider a revision of their essays.

Low (1-2;C/C-): These Low papers don't develop an original and/or discernible argument, especially considering how much time was allotted for the assignment. Because there is little to actually argue, the supporting body paragraphs really don't have a direction and simply repeat words and phrases about an element of Hawthorne's stories ("the veil is an important symbol") rather than exploring their significance. There may be a lack of care in how the material is presented. These papers can go one of two ways: 1. There are so many grammatical and mechanical errors that the reader is unable to comprehend what the writer is after. 2. There is so little to analyze, because the writer has not spent the necessary time reading the passage or word chosen. The 1 paper is even weaker than the 2 paper in terms of executing these skills. These writers should consult the previous criteria and seriously consider a revision of their essays.

Very Low (D and below): The writer has not even attempted the assignment.

