



Holistic Rubric

8–9 Superior papers are specific in their references, cogent in their definitions, and consider a multiplicity of views. These essays need not be without flaws, but they demonstrate the writer’s ability to analyze with insight and understanding and to control a wide range of the elements of effective composition. At all times, they stay focused and demonstrate an awareness of audience. The writer provides specific support—mostly through direct quotations—and connects the specifics to an overall meaning.

6–7 These papers are less thorough, less perceptive, or less specific than 8–9 papers. The specifics are still connected to an overall meaning, but they are less developed. They are well written, but with less maturity and control. While they demonstrate the writer’s ability to analyze, they reveal a more limited understanding and less control of academic discourse than do the papers in the 8–9 range.

5 The writer doesn’t contribute to a new understanding of the topic for the reader; 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.

3–4 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 misinterpretation 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.

1–2 These essays compound the weakness of the essays in the 3–4 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.
