

Holistic AP Essay Rubric

Although slight modifications of these guidelines may be required in order to address the specifics of a particular prompt, the narrative descriptions below still can be used as general guidelines for scoring single-draft essays using the 9-point AP scale. As always, **remember to reward the writers for what they do well.** Also, remember that AP stands for Answer the Prompt!

- 9-8 These well-focused and persuasive essays address the prompt directly and in a convincing manner. An essay scored a 9 demonstrates exceptional insight and language facility. An essay scored an 8 or a 9 combines adherence to the topic with excellent organization, content, insight, facile use of language, mastery of mechanics, and an understanding of the essential components of an effective essay. Literary devices and/or techniques are not merely listed, but the effect of those devices and/or techniques is addressed in the context of the passage, poem, or novel as a whole. Although not without flaws, these essays are richly detailed and stylistically resourceful, and they connect the observations to the passage, poem, or novel as a whole. Descriptors that come to mind while reading include: mastery, sophisticated, complex, specific, consistent, and well-supported.
- 7-6 These highly competent essays comprehend the task set forth by the prompt and respond to it directly, although some of the analysis may be implicit rather than explicit. The seven (7) is in many ways a thinner version of the 9-8 paper in terms of the discussion and supporting details, but it is still impressive, cogent, convincing. It also may be less well handled in terms of organization, insight, or vocabulary. Descriptors that come to mind while reading include: demonstrates a clear understanding, less precise, less well supported than the 9-8. These essays demonstrate an adherence to the task, but deviate from course on occasion. The mechanics are sound, but may contain a few errors which may distract but do not obscure meaning. Although there may be a few minor misreadings, the commentary is for the most part accurate with no significant sustained misreadings. An essay scored a six (6) is an upper-half paper, but it may be deficient in one of the essentials mentioned above. It may be less mature in thought or less well handled in terms of organization, syntax or mechanics. The analysis is somewhat more simplistic than with the seven, and lacks sustained, mature analysis.
- 5 Essays scored a five (5) may be overly simplistic in analysis, or rely almost exclusively on paraphrase rather than specific, textual examples. These essays may provide a plausible reading, but the analysis is implicit rather than explicit. These essays might provide a list of literary devices present, but make no effort to discuss the effect that the devices have on the poem, passage, or novel as a whole. Descriptors that come to mind while reading include: superficial, vague, and mechanical. The language is simplistic and the insight is limited or lacking.
- 4-3 Essays scored in this range compound the problems of the five (5) essays. They often demonstrate significant sustained misreadings, and provide little or no analysis. They maintain the general idea of the writing assignment, show some sense of organization, but are weak in content, maturity of thought, language facility, and/or mechanics. They may distort the topic or fail to deal adequately with one or more important aspect of the topic. Essays that are particularly poorly written may be scored a three (3). Descriptors that come to mind while reading include: incomplete, oversimplified, meager, irrelevant, and insufficient.
- 2-1 Essays scored in this range make an attempt to deal with the topic but demonstrate serious weakness in content and coherence and/or syntax and mechanics. Often, they are unacceptably (but mercifully) brief. They are poorly written on several counts, including numerous distracting errors in mechanics, and/or little clarity, coherence, or supporting evidence. Wholly vacuous, inept, and mechanically unsound essays should be scored a one (1).
- 0 0 is given to a response with no more than a reference to the task.

-- indicates a blank response or one with no reference to the task.