

Writing Requirements for English Courses

SC State Standard E4-5 (Writing: The student will write for a variety of audiences/purposes)

Objective: The student will create written work that has a clear focus; sufficient detail; coherent organization; effective use of voice; and correct use of the conventions of written STANDARD AMERICAN ENGLISH – addressing and completing Alignment of Indicator Concepts within each standard. Ask the instructor to explain each standard if required, and be sure to read the rubric for each document.

Each student must write four essays, one in each writing style. Each essay should be 150 – 200 words and written in PARAGRAPH form. It should include 3 – 5 (depending on essay assignment) paragraphs which logically develop and explain your topic. WRITE LEGIBLY (or type) your essay in complete sentences. It is your responsibility to consult the scoring sheet (rubric) beforehand so that you will be aware of how you will be graded. **Rubrics for each type of writing assignment are attached to this document, beginning on page 9.**

1. Descriptive Paper ([Rubric](#))

This paper must have an audience and a purpose. Generally, an appropriate subject for the paper is a person, place, or thing. The descriptive paper creates a memorable main impression – supported with effective use of many sensory details. The writing is “vivid,” and its sensory details involve the creative use of figurative language. The paper will be well organized, with strong transitions helping to link words and ideas. The paper should clearly state the subject and capture the reader’s attention in the introductory paragraph. See the teacher if you have any questions, or search the Internet for more information.

2. Narrative Paper ([Rubric](#))

“Narrative” means telling what happened; it takes the reader step by step through a personal experience, and uses the senses to describe things. It incorporates dialogue and metaphors along with good sensory descriptions. It should examine, in detail, a single event. It must contain a plot, characters, setting, climax, and ending. Details should be embellished and verbs vivid and precise. It will make a point in the OPENING sentence, or the point will be defined in the last sentence of the opening paragraph.

Some example prompts for an essay:

a. **Being Unprepared**

Because you have been sick, out of town, busy at work, or working on other homework, you didn’t have as much time to study for an important test as you needed. Everyone going to school has been in this situation. Think of a specific test that you took that you felt unprepared for and narrate the events that followed. Tell your readers about the preparation that you were able to do, the reasons you didn’t get to prepare as well as you wanted, the experience of taking the test, and any significant events that happened after you took the test. Your paper should

help readers understand what it felt like to be unprepared.

b. Light Bulb Moment (Sudden Inspiration)

Think of an experience when you realized that you suddenly understood an idea, a skill, or a concept you had been struggling with. It might be something related to a class you took or a specific athletic skill you were trying to perfect. Write a narrative that tells the story of your movement toward understanding. How did you finally come to understand? What changed your perceptions and gave you a new understanding? Your paper should make readers feel your struggle with the idea or skill and your sudden burst of understanding.

c. Childhood Event

Choose a vivid time from your childhood. Think of the first time you rode a school bus; or of a time you went to the principal's office; the first 'A' you earned on a test or paper; earning money to buy something you really wanted, and so forth. Tell the story in such a way as to convey to the reader the importance of the event and what made it so memorable.

d. Achieving a Goal

Think of a time when you achieved a personal goal. You might have finally completed a marathon or triathlon, bettered your score on the SAT, learned how to use a piece of software, or beaten your favorite video game. Tell your readers how you did it and how important it was to you.

e. The Good and the Bad

Recall an event in your life that seemed bad but turned out to be good. You might have suffered an injury, and while waiting to heal, you learned to use a computer. What makes the event change from bad to good may be something you learned, or something you did differently as a result, or something that happened that wouldn't have occurred otherwise. Tell the story of your experience and make your readers understand how an event that seemed negative at the time turned out to be a net positive.

f. Being a Teacher

Teaching someone else how to do something can be rewarding. Think of a skill that you have taught someone else how to do. Perhaps you have taught someone to swim, to bake a soufflé, or how to study effectively. Think about the process involved in teaching the skill and narrate the story for your readers.

g. Changing Places

Change is a constant in modern life. Changes occur in the economy, with personnel turnover (especially when new people come to be in charge), and sometimes just inexplicably. Think of a familiar place that has recently undergone a change. Perhaps the "mom and pop" grocery store you knew as a child is now a Food Lion, or your local bank is now part of Bank of America. Perhaps the change was more personal – an older sibling moved out and your parents turned

their old room into an office. Pick one specific change and narrate the events as they unfolded. Include your feelings about the change that occurred.

h. **Personal Rituals**

Describe a personal ritual that you, your friends, or your family have. Sometimes this will just be a habit, or you may do things in only one way due to superstition or family tradition. Pick one thing that you do – how you study, how you write a paper, how you get dressed, or how you prepare that special family meal. Your narrative should walk the reader through the steps of your ritual and why you do it that way.

i. **Standing Up**

Choose a time when you did something that took a lot of nerve, when you didn't follow the crowd, or when you stood up for your beliefs. Perhaps your friends were urging you to do something that you were uncomfortable with, and you refused. You might have taken an unpopular political position that your parents or friends disagreed with. Tell the story of what happened; how you came to decide to take the contrary path, what the results were, and how you felt after the event.

j. **Disagreeing**

Think of a time when you disagreed with a decision someone made and you decided to do something about it. The decision might have been made by someone you know personally, like a teacher or a family member, leading you to try to persuade them to reverse it or to try to “go over their head” to get someone else to force them to support your position. The decision may have been made by some governmental agency that directly affected you (e.g., forced you to attend a different school, raised your taxes). This action may have led you to write letters to the editor of the local newspaper, or to contact your representative in the legislature to express your displeasure. Whatever the event, your narrative will take the reader step by step through your experience and show why you disagreed with the decision and why you felt your response was appropriate.

Notes on Narrative writing:

- Your narrative should not be about a long period of time when many things happened (e.g., “My Time at Middle School”). Instead, write about a single event (e.g., “My First Middle School Track Meet”).
- Narratives take the reader step by step through an experience (tells a story).
- Narratives often involve the reader's senses (smell, touch, taste, sound, sight) to enhance the telling of the experience.
- Narratives often include dialogue and metaphors.
- Narratives don't have to be 100% truthful; if some bending of the truth effectively enhances the story, it's okay.

- Other ways to approach a narrative: Think of a problem that someone must face and then tell what happens as a result of the situation (e.g., “Making Mistakes”, “Finding New Friends”, “Being Frightened”, “Making Difficult Decisions”).

3. Persuasive Paper ([Rubric](#))

The purpose of the persuasive paper is to convince the reader that an opinion is true. All persuasive writings begin with two essential ingredients: an opinion and reasons to support it. The subject needs to be controversial. The introduction will have a “hook” or “grabber.” You can open with a question, anecdote, or an exaggeration. You, as the writer, will take a position “for” or “against” an issue and will try to convince the reader to believe or do something. This type of writing is used in advertisements to get the reader to buy a product. It can be used to get a reader to accept a point of view. In order to be convincing, however, you will need more than just a bare opinion; you will need FACTS! This sort of paper has an introduction, a body (where the argument is developed), and a conclusion.

You can often open with an unusual detail; a strong statement; an anecdote; statistic or fact; question(s); an exaggeration; or an outrageous statement.

4. Expository Paper ([Rubric](#))

The expository paper tells how something works; gives information; explains a topic; defines something; or shows how something is done. The best way to accomplish this is through the use of facts, statistical information, cause and effect relationships, or examples.

The thesis statement must be defined narrowly enough to be supported within the length of the essay. Each supporting paragraph must have a distinct controlling topic and all other sentences must factually relate to it. Transition words and phrases are important as they reinforce the logic and help the reader follow along. Since the expository style is factual, these papers should not contain emotion and are usually written in the third person (i.e., don’t use the pronoun I anywhere). Your conclusion paragraph should restate the ideas from your other paragraphs but in as an original manner as possible. (In other words, don’t just repeat what you’ve written above.) Try to finish with a statement that reinforces your position in a meaningful or memorable way. Remember never to introduce new material in the concluding paragraph.

Book Reports ([Rubric](#)) and Research Papers ([Rubric](#))

SC State Standard E4-1 (Reading: The student will read and comprehend a variety of literary texts in print and nonprint forms. The student will make predictions; draw conclusions; make inferences; evaluate literary elements (character/setting/plot/theme) in a given literary text.)

Consult the teacher for a list of approved literary texts, or seek approval for a text of the student's choosing. The report must be written in blue or black INK, or it may be TYPED double spaced. (Note: Due to the length of a book in comparison to a short story, students who choose to read and report on books will have their grade DOUBLED.)

1. Book Report OR Approved Short Story Analysis

Format:

1. Title Page, with the name of the book centered over the name of the author. Student's name and date placed at the bottom of the page or in the bottom right corner.
2. Setting: In two or three sentences, tell the place and time setting of the book. Comment on the RELEVANCE of the setting to the story.
3. Characters: Choose two main characters. Tell which character you liked MOST and WHY. Tell which character you liked LEAST and WHY. Do a short character sketch of each one. Tell what he/she is like; how he/she changes in the story; and explain why YOU think he/she changed.
4. Plot Summary: Trace the main story line from beginning to end. Make sure you identify the problems in the book and give your feelings about the final resolution of these problems. You should limit this part to 3 to 4 paragraphs.
5. Impact Statement: Discuss the impact this book/story had on you. What did it mean to you? Did it change your attitude in any way? Did it help you understand anything or anyone better? What criticisms do you have of this book? What would you have changed, if anything?

2. Research Paper

Here are some tips for creating a great research paper:

1. Choose a Topic

- a. Choose a topic which interests and challenges you. Your attitude towards the topic will probably determine how much effort you will put in to it.
- b. Focus on a limited subject. Most papers go wrong by trying to do too much. Instead of writing about war, for example, narrow it down to only one war, and if possible, to just one aspect or part of that war. If you are still uncertain about what to do, consult with your teacher.
- c. Select a subject that you can handle. Avoid things that are too technical or specialized and things that don't have a lot of potential references. (Some subjects won't have a lot of accessible sources, or the sources will all be from the Internet. Try to find a variety of sources such as magazine articles or books. Ask the reference specialist at the public library to help you find them.)

2. Find Information

- a. Surf the Internet. For general or background information, use a search engine such as Google or Bing. This will only be the beginning of your search, however. No matter how much information you find, you won't get a good grade if all your sources come from the Internet. Beware of bias

and misinformation on the Internet as well. Anyone can post anything on the Internet, which means you need to sift what you find carefully to get at the truth.

- b. Use the public library. You can start your search from your home computer. Go to this website: <http://catalog.lex.lib.sc.us/polaris/Search/default.aspx?ctx=1.1033.0.0.1> to begin your search. You will have to go to the library to pick up anything you select, so while you're there check out other stuff that they have, such as almanacs, atlases, encyclopedias, dictionaries, government publications, magazines, and newspapers.
- c. Read and Evaluate. On the Internet, as you find relevant information (or links), be sure to create a folder of favorites (sometimes called bookmarks). Print out information if you can, and take notes of relevant information if you can't. Consider photocopying relevant pages from books at the library. As you gather your references, make sure to write down the full bibliographical information (author, title, place of publication, publisher, date of publication, page numbers, URLs, creation or modification dates on Web pages, and your date of access. If you have Word 2007/2010, enter the information using the 'Insert Citation' button from the References Ribbon. (This has the additional bonus of Word creating an instant and perfect bibliography when you're ready for that.) If printing from the Internet, set up the browser to print the URL and date of access for every page. Articles without bibliographical information can't be used unless you can cite their source.

3. State Your Thesis

- a. Think about how you wish to approach your topic. Then write down your take on the subject in ONE sentence.
- b. The rest of your paper will expand on your belief and support and defend it.

4. Make a Tentative Outline

- a. An outline will organize your thoughts about the topic and help keep you on track.
- b. Don't worry too much about getting it right the first time; concentrate on finding logical points that will help you make your case.
- c. Check your outline to make sure that your points flow logically from one to the next. Your outline should include an INTRODUCTION, a BODY, and a CONCLUSION.
 - i. Introduction. State your thesis and the purpose of your research paper clearly. What is the chief reason you are writing the paper? State how you plan to approach your topic and briefly explain the major points you plan to cover and why readers should be interested in your topic.
 - ii. Body. This is where you will present your arguments to support your thesis statement. Try to find 3 supporting arguments for each position you take. (This is sometimes called the Rule of 3.) Begin with a strong argument; then use a stronger one; and end with the strongest argument as your final point.
 - iii. Conclusion. Restate or reword your thesis. Summarize your arguments. Explain why you have come to this particular conclusion.

5. Organize Your Research

- a. Organize the information you have collected in the order of your outline. If you use note cards, you might consider color-coding them to match the parts of the outline. For typed notes, use the text formatting features of your word processor to highlight or color the text.

- b. Analyze the data. Check it for accuracy, completeness, and currency. (For example, if you read an article from the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, new information could have been discovered since it was printed.) This is the most important part of writing the paper. Your analysis will help you learn more about the topic you picked, and you may even discover new information by synthesizing the data you have collected – which is the whole reason for research, and hence, research papers.
- c. Make sure to include only data that is pertinent to your thesis. Don't include data that you personally do not understand. If you don't understand it, it is likely that it may not be as pertinent to what you are trying to prove as you think.
- d. Use your own words when writing up your analysis. If you have to repeat something exactly, remember to use quotations and references to show where the information came from. Plagiarism is strictly forbidden and will result in a failing grade on your paper. (Plagiarism is all too easily found out, too, in this age of the Internet search engine!)
- e. If you don't have Word 2007/2010, be sure to write a draft bibliography as you go along to make it easier to include all the required sources at the end.

6. Write a First Draft

- a. Most research guides advise starting at the beginning of your outline when starting to write your paper. This has the merit of keeping your thoughts in order, but sometimes your brain refuses to work in this way. Rather than allowing yourself to be frustrated, write the portions of the paper that you're most sure of first. There will always be time to rearrange your paragraphs later.
- b. Be sure to mark areas that will need improvement with a symbol (such as *, or #, etc.) in the margin so that you will know to come back to them.
- c. Write something for each section of your outline. This will enable you to expand on it when it comes time for the final paper.

7. Revise the Outline and Draft

- a. Once the paper has been assembled, read through what you've written to make sure that you have followed the outline.
- b. Recheck any facts and figures to be sure you've gotten them right.
- c. Here are a couple of good checklists from [one website](#) that helps students prepare to write research papers:
 - i. **CHECKLIST ONE:**
 - 1. Is my thesis statement concise and clear?
 - 2. Did I follow my outline? Did I miss anything?
 - 3. Are my arguments presented in a logical sequence?
 - 4. Are all sources properly cited to ensure that I am not plagiarizing?
 - 5. Have I proved my thesis with strong supporting arguments?
 - 6. Have I made my intentions and points clear in the essay?
 - ii. **CHECKLIST TWO:**
 - 1. Did I begin each paragraph with a proper topic sentence?
 - 2. Have I supported my arguments with documented proof or examples?

3. Any run-on or unfinished sentences?
 4. Any unnecessary or repetitious words?
 5. Varying lengths of sentences?
 6. Does one paragraph or idea flow smoothly into the next?
 7. Any spelling or grammatical errors?
 8. Quotes accurate in source, spelling, and punctuation?
 9. Are all my citations accurate and in correct format?
 10. Did I avoid using contractions? Use "cannot" instead of "can't", "do not" instead of "don't"?
 11. Did I use third person as much as possible? Avoid using phrases such as "I think", "I guess", "I suppose"
 12. Have I made my points clear and interesting but remained objective?
 13. Did I leave a sense of completion for my reader(s) at the end of the paper?
- d. To help you with the checklists, there are several good reference books you may want to consult:
- i. Kate L. Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 7th Edition*
 - ii. Modern Language Association's *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing, 3rd Edition*
 - iii. William Strunk and E.B. White's *The Elements of Style, 4th Edition*
 - iv. Here are some links to them at Amazon.com:



- v. There are some free portions of Turabian and Strunk that can be found at these links:
 1. [Turabian](#)
 2. [Strunk and White](#)

8. Type the Final Paper

- a. Research papers look best when typed, but if you don't have a computer, or the time to do it at the library, write it carefully in blue or black ink.
- b. Reread the assignment that you have been given. Make sure your paper meets all of the requirements. If you're not sure, ask the teacher. Be sure to read the rubric so that you know how your paper will be scored.
- c. Proofread the paper carefully to make sure that everything is spelled, punctuated, and capitalized correctly. It's also a good idea to have other people read your paper before you turn it in. Fresh eyes will catch mistakes that you can't.

Rubric for the Descriptive Essay

CATEGORY	A	B	C	D
Introduction	Introductory paragraph clearly states subject of essay and captures the reader's attention.	Introductory paragraph states subject of essay but is not particularly inviting to the reader.	Introductory paragraph attempts to state subject of essay, but fails to capture the reader's attention.	No attempt is made to state the subject of the essay in the introductory paragraph.
Sensory Details	Essay includes details that appeal to at least three of the five senses (taste, touch, sound, sight, smell).	Includes details that appeal to fewer than three of the five senses.	Includes details that appeal to only one of the five senses.	Includes no details that appeal to any of the senses.
Word Choice	Writer uses vivid words and phrases that linger or draw pictures in the reader's mind, and the choice and placement of the words seems accurate, natural, and unforced.	Writer uses vivid words and phrases that linger or draw pictures in the reader's mind, but occasionally the words are used inaccurately or seem overdone.	Writer uses words that communicate clearly, but the writing lacks variety, punch, or flair.	Writer uses a limited vocabulary that does not communicate strongly or capture the reader's interest. Jargon or clichés may be present and detract from the meaning.
Simile/Metaphor/ Personification	Writer effectively uses simile, metaphor, and personification to describe the subject.	Writer uses one example of simile, metaphor, and personification to describe the subject	Writer may try to use simile, metaphor, and personification, but does so incorrectly.	Writer does not include simile, metaphor, and personification in the essay.
Sentence Structure (Sentence Fluency)	All sentences are well-constructed and have varied structure.	Most sentences are well-constructed and have varied structure.	Most sentences are well-constructed but have a similar structure.	Sentences lack structure and appear incomplete or rambling.
Grammar, Spelling, Capitalization, and Punctuation	There are no errors in grammar, spelling, capitalization, or punctuation. Rubric is attached to essay. Essay is completed on time.	There are some errors; however, these errors do not distract the reader. Rubric is attached to essay. Essay is completed on time.	There are errors that distract the reader. Rubric is attached to essay. Essay is completed on time.	There are serious errors that interfere with the reader's understanding of the essay. Rubric is not attached to essay. Essay is completed on time.

Rubric for the Narrative Essay

Features	6	5	4	3	2	1
Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject and unifying event clear and maintained • Theme/unifying theme explicitly stated • Reactions present throughout • Has effective closing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject and unifying event clear and maintained • Theme/unifying event is stated in opening or conclusion • Reactions present throughout (may not be even) • Has closing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject and unifying event are clear – may be prompt dependent (requiring reader inference) • Theme/unifying event is stated and/or summarized • Reactions present • May end abruptly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject/topic clear; theme / unifying event may not • Reader is able to infer theme / unifying event • Overpromise/ underdeliver OR underpromise/ overdeliver • No reactions • Abrupt ending • Lacks sufficiency to demonstrate a developed focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject/issue vague • Reader must infer main event and theme • Unrelated ideas or major drift from focus (brainstorming) • May be insufficient writing to determine subject and unifying event can be maintained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject and issue unclear, limited or confusing • Insufficient writing to show criteria are met
Elaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most episodes and reactions elaborated with specific detail • Some episodes may be developed with more detail than others (not necessarily balanced or even) • Some development of depth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some episodes or reactions elaborated with specific details • Contains minimal depth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May contain list of episodes/ events and/or reactions with some extensions • Most elaboration may be general 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May contain simple list of episodes and/or reactions with no extensions • Mostly general or underdeveloped • Lacks sufficiency to demonstrate developed elaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some attempt at elaboration • May be confusing, unclear, or repetitive • May be insufficient writing to determine that elaboration can be maintained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elaboration is absent, confusing, or repetitive • Insufficient writing to show that criteria are met
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative structure clear – sequence of episodes moves logically through time without noticeable gaps • Episodes appropriately paragraphed • Coherence and cohesion demonstrated through some appropriate use of devices (transitions, pronouns, causal linkage, etc.) • Varied sentence structure produces some cohesion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative structure is evident - sequence of episodes moves logically through time with a beginning, middle and ending with few gaps • Most paragraphing is appropriate • Coherence and cohesion (sentence to sentence) evident; may depend on holistic structure (chronology) • Most transitions are appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative structure is noticeable, but the reader may have to infer it - sequence of episodes moves logically through time with some gaps • Some appropriate paragraphing • Evidence of coherence may depend on sequence • If present, transitions may be simplistic or even redundant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure is attempted, but reader may still have to infer • Lacks appropriate narrative structure (off-mode) • May have a major lapse or inappropriate transitions that disrupt progression of events • May have little evidence of appropriate paragraphing • Limited structure within paragraphs (e.g., lacks purposeful ordering of sentences) • Lacks sufficiency to demonstrate developed organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure is attempted, but with little success (may be a random presentation of ideas) • Confusing • Insufficient writing to determine that organization can be sustained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very confusing/ little or no attempt at structure • Insufficient writing to meet criteria
Conventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses consistent agreement between parts of speech. No errors in mechanics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent agreement between parts of speech. Uses correct punctuation, capitalization, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintains agreement between parts of speech. Few errors in mechanics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occasional errors between parts of speech. Some errors in mechanics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsistent agreement between parts of speech. Many errors in mechanics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parts of speech show lack of agreement. Frequent errors in mechanics.
Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully-developed paper for grade level • Clear and purposeful focus; in-depth, balanced elaboration; sequence of episodes is coherently and cohesively developed throughout 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed paper for grade level • All features are not equally well-developed throughout 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bare-bones-developed paper for grade level • Simple and clear, presenting nothing more than the essentials • Limited depth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partially developed • Some (or one) of the feature(s) are not sufficiently formed, but all are present • Lacks narrative structure • Inference is usually required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempts to address the assignment, but only rudiments of techniques for forming focus, elaboration, and organization can be detected • Some confusion and/or disjointedness • May be insufficient writing to determine that the features can be maintained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not fulfill the assignment; barely deals with the topic; or does not present most or all of the features • Insufficient writing to show that criteria are met

Rubric for the Persuasive Essay

Component	6	5	4	3	2	1
Focus	Takes a clear position and supports it consistently with well-chosen reasons and/or examples; may use persuasive strategy to convey an argument.	Takes a clear position and supports it with relevant reasons and/or examples through much of the essay.	Takes a clear position and supports it with some relevant reasons and/or examples; there is some development of the essay.	Takes a position and provides uneven support; may lack development in parts or be repetitive OR essay is no more than a well-written beginning.	Takes a position, but essay is underdeveloped.	Attempts to take a position (addresses topic), but position is very unclear OR takes a position, but provides minimal support; may only rephrase the prompt.
Organization	Is focused and well organized, with effective use of transitions.	Is well organized, but may lack some transitions.	Is generally organized, but has few or no transitions among selections.	Is organized in parts of the essay; other parts are disjointed and/or lack transitions.	Is disorganized or unfocused in much of the essay OR is clear, but too brief.	Exhibits little or no apparent organization.
Sentence Fluency and Word Choice	Consistently exhibits variety in sentence structure and word choice.	Exhibits some variety in sentence structure and uses good word choice; occasionally, words may be used inaccurately.	Most sentences are well constructed but have similar structure; word choice lacks variety or flair.	Sentence structure may be simple and unvaried; word choice is mostly accurate.	Sentences lack formal structure; word choice may often be inaccurate.	Sentences run-on and appear incomplete and rambling; word choice may be inaccurate in much or in the entire essay
Conventions	Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation are few and do not interfere with understanding.	Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation do not interfere with understanding.	More frequent errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation, but they do not interfere with understanding.	Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation sometimes interfere with understanding.	Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation interfere with understanding in much of the essay.	Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation prevent reader from fully understanding the essay.

Rubric for the Expository Essay

		Excellent	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement
C O N T E N T A N D O R G A N I Z A T I O N	Response to Topic/ Thesis	Makes a strong, insightful assertion (i.e., thesis) that addresses the topic clearly and moves beyond the predictable; takes a risk and explores issues thoughtfully and in depth	Demonstrates some insight into the topic, but the assertion is predictable or merely reflects class ideas	Suggests confusion about the topic, neglects important aspects of the problem; lacks focus or demonstrates confused or simplistic thinking
	Supporting Detail	Uses significant, rich detail that proves thesis; essay contains at least 3 significant main ideas that support thesis	Uses some details or examples, but could be extended to show more understanding and/or support	Lacks concrete, relevant details or quotes that prove thesis; provides simplistic generalization; unclear
	Commentary/ Analysis	Original commentary analyzes and interprets details, quotes, and examples, showing how they relate to the thesis	Explains significance of details, but analysis could be expanded to show stronger connection to thesis or provide more insight about the details	Commentary is lacking or is predictable and disconnected, summarizing instead of analyzing significance; shows no clear connection of details to thesis
	Use of Quotes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses 3 quotations that clearly support the thesis • Introduces quotations correctly by setting the context and mentioning the speaker • Clearly explains the significance of the quotes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses 3 quotes • Commentary on quotes addresses issue, but could be pushed further 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses fewer than 3 quotes OR quotes do not support topic • Quotes need more commentary • Fails to introduce quotes; formats quotes incorrectly
	Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has clear, sophisticated organization; body paragraphs relate back to thesis • Paragraph parts flow seamlessly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has adequate organization • Paragraphs have all key parts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak organization makes argument hard to follow; body paragraphs need clearer relation to thesis • Paragraphs are missing key parts
	Transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses thoughtful transitions between all ideas at the essay and paragraph levels for the smooth progression of ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses transitions between and within paragraphs, but they may seem awkward or forced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has inconsistent transitions at either the paragraph or essay level
	Introduction/ Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has an introduction that grabs reader's attention • Has a conclusion that provokes further thought 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has introduction, but it may not draw the reader in • Has a conclusion, but it may not tie up loose ends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction and/or conclusion is simplistic and could be more engaging and/or clearer OR lacks an introduction and/or conclusion
S T Y L E	Command of Language (Voice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language is natural and captures the writer's "voice" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language is adequate, but doesn't reflect unique voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language is formulaic and contains use of passive voice and/or 2nd person "you"
	Word Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Striking, vivid words catch the reader's eye; strong use of action verbs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some use of action verbs and strong words; lapses into "to be" verbs at times 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes wordy expressions, repetition of the verbs "is" and "has"
	Sentence Variety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows mastery over a variety of sentence openers and structures and uses them appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contains some varied sentence structure; most sentences follow subject-verb pattern 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not contain much sentence variety
	Grammar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has no BIG 5 errors or other grammar errors • Uses present tense to discuss literature • Proofreading is present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammar errors do not disrupt the flow of the paper • Some proofreading is present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 or more BIG 5 error • Fails to use the present tense to discuss literature

Rubric for Book Reports

Assessment Areas	4	3	2	1
Design Layout	Very attractive with great use of color, graphics and placement	Attractive with good use of color, graphics and placement	Somewhat attractive, but lacks sufficient attention to details	Shows little attempt to create an attractive document
Conventions	Excellent spelling, grammar, and punctuation	Very few errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation	Several errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation	Many errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation
Organization	All assigned topics are covered and arranged in logical order	Most assigned topics are covered and are in logical order overall	Most assigned topics are covered but order needs work	Some assigned topics are covered with little attempt at logical order
Content	Writing is well organized, has superb diction, and shows excellent grasp of the book's content	Overall writing is organized well, has good word choices and indicates a good grasp of book's content	Writing has several organizational errors, adequate word choice and shows a fair grasp of book's content	Writing lacks organization, but needs improvement in word choice and indicates a poor grasp of book's content

Rubric for Research Papers

Performance Element	Distinguished	Proficient	Intermediate	Novice
Purpose and Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes and maintains clear focus; evidence of distinctive voice and/or appropriate tone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focused on a purpose; evidence of a voice and/or suitable tone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An attempt to establish and maintain purpose and communicate with the audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited awareness of audience and/or purpose
Development of Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depth and complexity of ideas supported by rich, engaging and/or pertinent details; evidence analysis, reflection and insight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depth of idea development supported by elaborated, relevant details 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unelaborated idea development; unelaborated and/or repetitious details 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal idea development; limited and/or unrelated details
References	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of references indicates substantial research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of references indicates ample research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some references 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Few references
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Careful and/or suitable organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Logical organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lapses in focus and/or coherence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Random or weak organization
Sentence Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Variety of sentence structure and lengths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Controlled and varied sentence structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simplistic and/or awkward sentence structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorrect or lack of topic and/or ineffective wording and/or sentence structure
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Precise and/or rich language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acceptable, effective language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simplistic and/or imprecise language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorrect and/or ineffective wording
Grammar and Formatting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Control of surface features 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Few errors in grammar or format relative to length and complexity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some errors in grammar and/or format that do not interfere with communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Errors in grammar and format (e.g., spelling, punctuation, capitalization, headings)