

Required Formal Essay Elements

Thesis / Claim

- Addresses all required components of the prompt and instructions
- Expressed using clear, specific, and opinionated language, evident of close reading of the text(s)

Evidence

- Purposefully chosen and edited for potency, showing a depth of understanding of the text(s)
- Clearly contextualized and effectively integrated into the essay's prose
- Cited using MLA parenthetical citations (author's last name page number)

Argument/Analysis/Explanation

- Logically connects the specific language and ideas of the evidence with the specific language and ideas of the claim
- Presents new understandings gained through close reading of the text, focusing on the significance of key words and details
- Directly supports all aspects of the essay's thesis, providing both depth and breadth of understanding

Organization

- Title expresses the essence of the paper in a few, clever and expressive words.
- Introduction presents necessary information and terms and states essay's thesis.
- Body paragraphs are sequenced logically for maximum effect, and start with a topic sentence linked to the claim.
- Evidence is contextualized and integrated into the essay writer's prose.
- Evidence is analyzed, logically connecting the specific language and ideas of the evidence to that of the claim.
- Closing sentence reconnects the paragraph's key ideas and details and furthers the paragraph's topic sentence.
- Concluding paragraph reconnects the essay's big ideas, tying back to the thesis, expressing a new understanding.
- Essay wraps up, expressing the value of the message communicated to the reader through the essay's thesis.

Language, Mechanics and Formal Writing Expectations

- Formal grammar, punctuation and mechanics are used throughout.
- Purposeful word choice and content-specific vocabulary are used to effectively support the thesis.
- Transitional words and phrases and a variety of simple, compound and complex sentences are used to express relationships between evidence and ideas while engaging the reader.
- MLA formatting expectations must be followed: heading in upper left-hand corner, one-inch margins, formal size 12 font, double spacing, centered title, textual evidence cited using parenthetical citations.
- Literary present tense is used throughout.
- Only 3rd person pronouns may be used. 1st person (I, me, we) and 2nd person pronouns (you, your) are not acceptable.
- No contractions in formal writing. (*Do not use don't!*)
- Never use empty phrasing like "This shows how." Instead, *specify* what "this" is, and *explain* "how."
- Avoid "backstage" language like the words *quote*, *essay*, *page*, *textual evidence*, *thesis*, etc. These words are used to write essays, but should not be used in an essay.