**Required Formal Essay Elements**

**Thesis / Claim**

* Addresses all required components of the prompt
* Expressed using clear and specific language, evident of close reading of the assigned 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

**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 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.