STUDYWALKS · HOMESCHOOL PACK · FREE TO PRINT

Writing Pack

Essay prompts tied to the units of English 9, English 10, College Composition, American Literature, English Literature and Analyzing and Interpreting Literature, with an analytic rubric, a narrative rubric, annotated model answers for English 9 and English 10, a writing-process guide and a parent grading sheet.

How to use this pack

StudyWalks finals are multiple choice, so the writing in a language arts course is the parent's to assign and grade. This pack gives you 52 prompts tied to the units of six courses, an analytic rubric for essays, a narrative rubric for personal narratives and a research paper rubric, annotated model answers for the English 9 and English 10 prompts, a guide to the writing process, a grading sheet and a record of the year's essays. StudyWalks never scores an essay; the parent does.

1. Pick a prompt after the student has finished the units it names.
2. Hand the student the process guide and the rubric with the prompt, so the standard is known before the first draft.
3. Read the draft, give feedback against the rubric, and ask for a revision.
4. Score the final on the grading sheet and add it to the writing record.

A writing-intensive year

Whether a course is writing-intensive is the parent's decision; there is no single definition for homeschools, and states and colleges that use the term define it their own way, so check yours. StudyWalks' suggestion, not a rule: across the year, at least six graded essays from this pack (roughly 6,000 words of finished writing in all), including at least one taken through two or more drafts with written feedback and one research essay with citations, each recorded on the writing record at the end of this pack. A course with fewer or shorter essays is still a good course; it is the parent's call whether to call it writing-intensive.

The recommended plan suggests English 9, English 10 and College Composition as writing-intensive years; two are required.

The writing process

Nine steps, each tied to the College Composition units that teach it. Students in the literature courses can use the same steps; the unit references point to where each skill is taught.

Step	What to do	Taught in
1. Read the prompt	Underline the task words (analyze, compare, argue, explain). Name the purpose, the audience and the genre. Check the length and the sources required.	Composition unit 1
2. Gather	Reread the work or sources. Copy quotations exactly, with page or line numbers. For research, keep a log of every source you open and why you kept or dropped it.	Composition units 21–22
3. Write a working thesis	One or two sentences that answer the prompt with a claim. Test it: could a thoughtful reader disagree? Does it say how or why, not only what?	Composition unit 13
4. Outline	List the main points in the order a reader needs them. Under each, note the evidence and one sentence on what it shows.	Composition unit 15
5. Draft	Write straight through without polishing. Each body paragraph: a point, the evidence, the explanation, a link back to the thesis. Introduce every quotation with a signal phrase.	Composition units 14, 17, 23
6. Revise	Put the draft away for a day. Revise from large to small: does the thesis still match what the essay argues? Are the points in the best order? Add, cut, move and combine before fixing sentences. Ask the parent or a reader for feedback against the rubric.	Composition units 12, 20
7. Edit and proofread	Read aloud. Check sentence boundaries, agreement, pronouns, commas, apostrophes and commonly confused words. Read the last sentence first to catch typos.	Composition units 2–11
8. Cite and format	Cite every quotation, paraphrase and borrowed idea in the assigned style (MLA for literature, unless the parent assigns APA or Chicago). Build the works-cited or references list.	Composition units 24–27
9. Hand in and reflect	Submit the final with the drafts. Write three sentences: what you changed most, what you would do with another day, and one skill to work on next.	Composition unit 12

Three schedules

A one-week essay (600–1,200 words)

- Day 1: read the prompt, gather, working thesis
- Day 2: outline and draft
- Day 3: rest
- Day 4: revise; parent feedback
- Day 5: edit, cite, hand in and reflect

A three-week research essay (1,500–2,000 words)

- Week 1: research question, sources, research log, evaluate sources, notes
- Week 2: thesis, outline, annotated bibliography, full draft
- Week 3: parent conference, revision, editing, citations, final and reflection

A four-week research paper (2,000–2,500 words)

- Week 1: research question, working claim, searching, testing sources, source log and notes; research proposal to the parent (checkpoint 1)
- Week 2: reading and annotating, annotated bibliography with six or more sources, claim grid and outline (checkpoints 2 and 3)
- Week 3: draft the body sections first, then the introduction and conclusion; parent conference on the full draft (checkpoint 4)
- Week 4: revise from the whole paper down to the citations, works cited list, proofreading, final paper and reflection (checkpoints 5 and 6)

The rubric

Score each criterion from 4 to 1, then add the four scores (16 points in all). Use the same rubric for every essay prompt; the prompt sets the task, the rubric sets the standard. Personal narratives (English 9 prompt 1) use the narrative rubric that follows, and the English 10 research paper (prompt 8) uses the research paper rubric.

Criterion	4 Strong	3 Competent	2 Developing	1 Beginning
Thesis and focus Composition units 13, 18 · English 9 units 10, 21, 24 · English 10 units 5, 9, 14, 22	A clear, arguable thesis that answers the prompt and makes a claim a reader could dispute. Every paragraph serves it.	A clear thesis that answers the prompt. Most paragraphs serve it; a few drift.	A thesis is present but is a topic, a fact or a summary rather than a claim, or it changes partway through.	No identifiable thesis, or the essay does not answer the prompt.
Evidence and analysis Composition units 17, 22, 23, 28–31 · English 9 units 10, 20, 24, 25 · English 10 units 5, 9, 10, 18, 20, 22	Well-chosen, accurate evidence (quotations, details, data or sources), introduced and explained: the essay says how each piece supports the claim and answers a counterpoint where one matters.	Relevant, accurate evidence for each main point, with some explanation; a few quotations are left to speak for themselves.	Thin or loosely related evidence, or mostly summary and plot retelling with little explanation.	Little or no evidence, or evidence that is inaccurate or unrelated.
Organization Composition units 14–16, 19 · English 9 units 10, 23, 24 · English 10 units 9, 22, 24	An opening that sets up the claim, paragraphs that each develop one point in a logical order, transitions that show how ideas connect, and a conclusion that does more than repeat.	A clear opening, body and close; paragraphs are mostly unified; transitions are present but sometimes mechanical.	Paragraphs mix several points or appear in no clear order; the opening or conclusion is missing or generic.	Hard to follow: no paragraphing, or ideas in no discernible order.
Style and mechanics Composition units 2–11, 24–27 · English 9 units 5, 9, 15, 25 · English 10 units 2, 6, 16, 24	Precise words, varied sentences and a tone suited to the audience; very few errors in grammar, punctuation or spelling; sources cited correctly in the assigned style.	Clear sentences and an appropriate tone; some errors, none that block meaning; citations present with minor slips.	Wordy or repetitive sentences, a tone that slips, or errors frequent enough to slow the reader; citations incomplete.	Errors that block meaning, or sources used without citation.

From points to a letter grade (a suggestion)

Total points	Suggested grade
15–16	A
13–14	B
11–12	C
9–10	D
8 or less	Not yet: revise and resubmit

The scale is a starting point. You set the grade, and you may weight criteria differently for a particular prompt (for example, double the evidence score on a research essay).

Narrative rubric

For personal narratives (English 9 prompt 1). Score each criterion from 4 to 1 and add the four scores (16 points in all); the letter scale is the same as the analytic rubric's.

Criterion	4 Strong	3 Competent	2 Developing	1 Beginning
Focus and situation English 9 unit 6	One clear moment, set up quickly: the reader soon knows who, where and what is at stake. Every scene serves the turning point.	A clear moment and situation; a scene or a paragraph drifts from it.	The moment is buried in a long run of events, or the situation stays unclear for too long.	No single moment: a list of events with no clear point.
Narrative technique English 9 unit 6	Dialogue, pacing and sensory detail show the key moment; the story slows down where it matters and moves quickly through the rest.	Some dialogue and detail; the pacing mostly works, though the key moment is partly told rather than shown.	Mostly told, not shown: little dialogue or detail, or every part given the same weight.	Summary only, with no dialogue, detail or pacing.
Organization and sequence English 9 units 3, 6	A hook that draws the reader in, events in a clear order joined by time transitions (any flashback is signaled), and a close that reflects on what the moment meant.	A clear beginning, middle and end with transitions; the reflection is brief or general.	The order is sometimes confusing, or the ending stops abruptly or only lists what happened.	Hard to follow: no clear order and no ending.
Style and conventions English 9 units 5, 9, 15	Precise, vivid words and varied sentences in a voice that sounds like the writer; dialogue punctuated correctly; very few errors.	Clear sentences and a steady voice; some errors, none that block meaning.	Flat or repetitive wording, shifts in tense, or frequent errors, including in dialogue punctuation.	Errors that block meaning.

Research paper rubric

For the research paper (English 10 prompt 8). Score each criterion from 4 to 1 and add the four scores (16 points in all); the letter scale is the same as the analytic rubric's. The parent signs off each checkpoint on the research checkpoint sheet and grades the finished paper. Because the paper is long, many families count it as two essays in the course grade; the parent decides.

Criterion	4 Strong	3 Competent	2 Developing	1 Beginning
Question and thesis English 10 units 23, 24	A focused, researchable question that grows from the course, and a thesis that answers it with a claim a reader could dispute. Every section serves the thesis, and the claim shows signs of being refined by the evidence.	A clear question and a thesis that answers it. Most sections serve the thesis; the question is a little broad, or the thesis shifts slightly.	The question is too broad, or a fact or a yes-or-no answer settles it, or the thesis is a topic or a summary rather than a claim.	No identifiable question or thesis; the paper reports on a topic.
Sources: range, credibility and synthesis English 10 units 23, 24	Six or more real sources, at least two primary, each tested for authority, accuracy, currency and purpose; the paper says why the main ones can be trusted. Sources are compared and put into conversation to support the thesis, and disagreements among them are explained.	Six sources, including two primary, with brief checks on their credibility. Sources mostly support separate points, with some comparison.	Fewer than six sources or fewer than two primary, or sources that are unchecked (no author, date or publisher), or sources that speak one at a time with no connection.	One or two sources, sources that are not credible, or sources that are listed but not used.
Organization and development English 10 units 22, 24	An introduction that sets up the question, the thesis and the evidence; sections ordered by the paper's claims, not by its sources; each section develops one claim with evidence and analysis; transitions show how sections connect; a counterclaim or limit is answered; a conclusion that does more than repeat.	A clear introduction, body and conclusion; sections mostly follow the claims; transitions are present but mechanical; the counterclaim is brief.	Sections follow the sources one after another or mix several claims; the introduction or conclusion is generic; the paper is thin in places for its length.	No clear order; ideas in no discernible sequence; far short of the length.
Citation, integration and conventions (MLA) English 10 units 16, 24	Quotations are short, introduced and explained; paraphrase changes both words and structure; every borrowed idea is cited in MLA style in the text and in an alphabetical works cited list that matches; very few errors in grammar, punctuation or spelling.	Citations are present with minor slips; a few quotations are long or unexplained; the works cited list mostly matches the text; some errors, none that block meaning.	Citations are incomplete or inconsistent, the list does not match the text, paraphrase follows the source too closely, or errors are frequent enough to slow the reader.	Sources are used without citation, text is copied, or errors block meaning.

Research checkpoint sheet

For the research paper (English 10 prompt 8). For each row the parent writes the due date, the date it was finished and initials. A row passes when the work shows the following. Topic proposal: a researchable question, a working claim, the sources you have and need, and a schedule. Annotated bibliography: six or more sources, at least two primary, each with a short note on its author, evidence and use. Outline: sections ordered by claims, with the evidence for each. Draft: a full draft with citations in the text. Revision: changes made after the parent's comments, from the whole paper down to the sentences. Final paper and works cited: the paper proofread, every citation checked against its entry, and the list in MLA style.

Checkpoint	Due	Done	Parent's initials
Topic proposal			
Annotated bibliography			
Outline			
Draft			
Revision			
Final paper and works cited			

Prompts: English 9

English 9 has eight prompts, one for each writing skill the course builds: a personal narrative, essays about a story, a poem, a play, an epic and a novel, an argument on a local question and a short research essay. Each is taught step by step in the last lesson of the unit it follows. Grade prompt 1 with the narrative rubric and prompts 2 to 8 with the pack's rubric. Two optional tasks, a talk and a timed essay, follow the eight. Model answers for every prompt come after the prompts.

1. A Turning Point

PERSONAL NARRATIVE Length: 600–900 · After unit 6 (Writing Narratives)

Write a true story about one moment that changed you: a choice, a discovery, a loss or a first time. Choose one moment, not a whole season. Open with a hook, order the events with time transitions, and slow down at the key moment so it gets the most space. Use dialogue and sensory detail to show what happened, and close by reflecting on what the moment meant to you. Helen Keller's account of the well-house, studied in unit 6, is a model of a turning point told plainly.

Grade with the narrative rubric.

2. Suspense or Irony in a Story

LITERARY ANALYSIS: STORY Length: 600–900 · After units 3 (The Short Story I: Plot, Conflict, Setting and Point of View); 4 (The Short Story II: Character, Theme, Irony, Mood and Suspense); 10 (Writing About Literature: Claims, Evidence, Quotation and Analysis)

Choose one public-domain story from this course, such as "The Monkey's Paw", "The Gift of the Magi", "The Story of an Hour", "The Open Window" or "The Cask of Amontillado". Explain how the writer builds suspense or irony. State a claim a careful reader could argue with, and support it with at least three short quotations from different parts of the story. Introduce and cite each quotation, explain what it shows, and write in the present tense. Analyze how and why; do not retell the plot.

3. A Poem's Imagery and Form

POETRY EXPLICATION Length: 500–800 · After units 7 (Poetry I: Speaker, Imagery and Figurative Language); 8 (Poetry II: Sound, Rhythm, Meter and Form); 10 (Writing About Literature: Claims, Evidence, Quotation and Analysis)

Choose one public-domain poem from units 7 and 8. Explain how its imagery and its form (its lines and stanzas, rhyme, meter, or the turn of a sonnet) work together to create its meaning. Your thesis names the poem's meaning and the two or three devices that build it. Quote the lines you discuss, mark each line break with a slash, and explain every quotation.

4. Who Is Responsible

ARGUMENT ABOUT LITERATURE Length: 800–1,000 · After units 13 (Romeo and Juliet I: Acts 1 and 2); 14 (Romeo and Juliet II: Acts 3 to 5, Tragedy and Its Sources)

Who or what is most responsible for the deaths in Romeo and Juliet: the feud, one character, the lovers' haste or chance? Argue for one main cause rather than blaming everyone a little. Support your claim with evidence from at least three acts, and name the speaker and the act and scene for every line you quote. Answer the strongest counterclaim fairly.

5. Hospitality or Heroism

INFORMATIVE AND ANALYTICAL Length: 800–1,000 · After units 16 (The Epic and the Hero: Homer, the Oral Tradition and Epic Conventions); 17 (The Odyssey I: Books 1 to 12); 18 (The Odyssey II: Books 13 to 24, Homecoming and Its Echoes); 23 (Writing to Inform and Explain)

What does the Odyssey show about hospitality (xenia, the guest-friendship of Homer's world) or about heroism? Choose one. Build the essay on three episodes from different parts of the poem, quote briefly from each in the Butcher and Lang translation, and explain each quotation in your own words. Organize by points, not by the order of the plot. Where the poem troubles you, give both readings fairly.

6. The Frame and the Reveal

LITERARY ANALYSIS: NOVEL Length: 800–1,000 · After unit 19 (The Novel: Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde)

How do the frame (Utterson's investigation) and the delayed reveal (the two documents at the end) shape Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde? Choose three parts of the book, quote briefly from each, and explain how each part's place in the structure affects the reader. Write about how the book is built, not only about what happens in it.

7. A Local Question

ARGUMENT ON AN ISSUE Length: 800–1,000 · After units 21 (Argument and Rhetoric: Claims, Evidence, Appeals and Fallacies); 24 (Writing Arguments)

Take a position on a real question that your town, neighborhood, church or club is deciding. State a precise claim a fair reader could dispute, and support it with three reasons, each with evidence and an explanation of how the evidence proves it. State the strongest opposing view as its supporters would, then answer it. Check the draft for the fallacies of unit 21, and end with a call to action.

8. A Short Research Essay

SHORT RESEARCH ESSAY Length: 1,000–1,500, plus a works cited list (MLA) · After unit 25 (Short Research: Questions, Sources, Quotation, Citation and Plagiarism)

Answer a research question that grows out of any unit of this course. Use at least four sources, including at least one primary text. Check each secondary source's author, publisher, date and evidence, and drop any that fail. Keep quotation, paraphrase and summary apart in your notes. Cite every borrowed word and idea in MLA style, in the sentence and in a works cited list. Let your own thesis lead, and use the sources as support.

Optional: A Talk

PRESENTATION Length: 4 to 6 minutes · After unit 26 (Speaking, Listening and Media)

Deliver your essay for prompt 7 or 8 aloud to your family. Pick one main message and your strongest evidence, speak from short notes rather than a script, plan one or two simple visuals, rehearse with a timer, and answer the audience's questions at the end. The parent uses the speaking checklist below; the talk is not scored on the 16-point rubric.

Use the speaking checklist or the debate checklist.

Optional: A Timed Essay

TIMED ANALYSIS Length: 45 minutes · After unit 27 (Capstone: Reading and Writing Across the Genres)

The parent chooses a short public-domain poem or prose passage the course did not quote, and a task such as "Explain how the writer uses imagery to create mood." In 45 minutes: read the prompt twice and mark its task words, mark three pieces of evidence, write a one-sentence thesis, plan for five minutes, draft, and save five minutes to proofread. Grade it with the pack's rubric, allowing for a first draft.

Speaking checklist (the optional talk)

Tick each line the talk meets. It is a checklist for feedback, not a score.

- States one main message near the start, and the audience can repeat it afterward.
- Supports the message with the strongest evidence from the essay, with sources named aloud.
- Uses signpost words (first, next, finally) so listeners can follow the order.
- Speaks from notes, not a script, at a steady rate and a volume the whole room can hear.
- Looks at the audience for most of the talk.
- Uses one or two visuals that help, not distract.
- Finishes within 4 to 6 minutes.
- Answers questions with evidence, and says so plainly when an answer is not known.

Prompts: English 10

English 10 has eight prompts, one for each major writing task of the year: an argument about a Greek tragedy, a comparison of two world stories, an essay on poems in translation, a rhetorical analysis, an essay on a novel, an essay on a play or on war poems, an extended argument with sources, and a research paper. Each is taught step by step in the last lesson of the unit it follows. Grade prompts 1 to 7 with the pack's rubric and prompt 8 with the research paper rubric; the research paper also has a checkpoint sheet for the parent and a four-week schedule. Three optional tasks follow the eight: a satire, a speech or debate, and a timed essay. Model answers for every prompt come after the prompts: prompts 2, 4 and 7 have models at four score levels, and prompts 1, 3, 5, 6 and 8 have a top-level model and a note on what lowers the score. The parent grades every essay.

1. Whose Law Should Rule?

ARGUMENT ABOUT LITERATURE Length: 800–1,000 · After units 4 (Greek Tragedy I: The Athenian Theater and Antigone); 5 (Greek Tragedy II: Law, Conscience and the Tragic Hero)

In Sophocles' Antigone, Creon forbids anyone to bury Polyneices, and Antigone buries him anyway. Whose law should rule in Thebes: Creon's edict, or the unwritten laws Antigone obeys? Take a side and state it as a claim a careful reader could argue with. Use Francis Storr's translation, name him at your first quotation, and support your claim with short quotations from at least three different moments of the play, naming the speaker of each. State the strongest counterclaim as its supporters would, then answer it fairly. Argue from the play itself; do not retell it.

2. Two Stories, One Theme

COMPARATIVE LITERARY ANALYSIS Length: 900–1,200 · After units 7 (World Short Fiction I: Nineteenth-Century Realism); 8 (World Short Fiction II: Modern Stories Across Cultures); 9 (Writing Comparative Literary Analysis)

Choose two world stories from units 7 and 8, such as "The Necklace" and "The Bet", and compare them on one theme they share. Name your basis of comparison, then make a thesis about how the stories are alike and how they differ. Organize point by point or in two blocks, quote briefly from both stories for every point, and explain each quotation in your own words. Name each translator at the first quotation, keep to the literary present, and end with a works cited list that names both stories, their translators and the books you read them in.

3. Two Translators, One Poem

POETRY AND TRANSLATION Length: 600–900 · After unit 10 (World Poetry in Translation)

Choose one poem that two public-domain translators have put into English, such as Li Bai's "River-Merchant's Wife" in Ezra Pound's Cathay (1915) and in Arthur Waley's version (1919), or the pair your parent gives you from unit 10. Read both aloud twice and set the matching lines side by side. Group the differences under two or three points, such as voice, form and ending, and argue what each translator's choices emphasize. Quote both versions for every point, credit every word choice to the translator, and argue only from the English poems, never from guesses about the original language.

4. How a Speech Persuades

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS Length: 800–1,100 · After units 11 (Julius Caesar I: Shakespeare's Rome, Acts 1 and 2); 12 (Julius Caesar II: Acts 3 to 5, the Funeral Speeches and Plutarch); 13 (Rhetoric I: The Rhetorical Situation, Appeals and Devices); 14 (Rhetoric II: Speeches and Documents Across Time)

Choose Mark Antony's funeral speech in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar (act 3, scene 2) or one speech from unit 14, such as Pericles, Elizabeth I, Patrick Henry, Washington, Sojourner Truth, Chief Joseph or Susan B. Anthony. Explain how the speech persuades its audience. Begin with the situation: who speaks, to whom, when and why. Then analyze the appeals and devices, quoting briefly and explaining how each one works on this audience, not just what it is called. If the speech reaches us through a translator or a reporter, name that person and treat the text as that person's version.

5. Creator or Creature?

LITERARY ANALYSIS: NOVEL Length: 1,000–1,200 · After units 17 (The Novel I: Frankenstein, the Letters and Volume I); 18 (The Novel II: Frankenstein, Volumes II and III, and Its Sources)

Write a literary analysis of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (the 1818 text). Choose one question. Who is more responsible for the deaths in the novel, the creator or the creature? Or, how do the nested narrators (Walton, Victor and the creature) shape the way we judge the creature? Build your claim on at least three moments from different parts of the book. Quote briefly, name the narrator of every quotation, and cite volume and chapter. Give interpretations as readings, not as facts, and answer the strongest counterclaim.

6. Nora's Choice, or Two War Poets

ANALYTICAL ESSAY Length: 800–1,000 · After units 19 (Poetry of War and the Modern World); 20 (Modern Drama: A Doll's House)

Choose one. (a) In Ibsen's A Doll's House, why does Nora leave? Argue that her final choice grows from the whole play, using R. Farquharson Sharp's translation and, if you compare wording, William Archer's, naming the translator whenever you quote. (b) How do two war poets from unit 19, such as Rupert Brooke and Wilfred Owen, differ in tone toward the same war? Whichever you choose, state a claim, support it with at least three explained quotations, and treat other views of the ending, or of the war, as readings to be answered fairly.

7. A Question Worth Arguing

EXTENDED ARGUMENT WITH SOURCES Length: 1,200–1,500 · After units 21 (Evaluating Arguments: Reasoning, Evidence and Fallacies in Depth); 22 (Writing Arguments II: The Extended Argument and Synthesis)

Take a position on a real ethical question that your town, school, church or club faces. State a precise claim a fair reader could dispute. Use at least three sources and make them talk to each other: at least one public-domain text from this course (for example Thoreau, Washington's Farewell Address or Woolf's A Room of One's Own) and others you have checked for authority and accuracy. Every source must be real; do not invent a study or a quotation. Map each reason to evidence before you draft, answer the strongest counterclaim, check your logic for fallacies, and end with a works cited list.

8. The Research Paper

RESEARCH PAPER Length: 2,000–2,500, plus a works cited list (MLA) · After units 23 (Research I: Inquiry, Searching and Evaluating Sources); 24 (Research II: Synthesis, Citation and the Research Paper)

Write a research paper on a question that grows out of any unit of this course. Use at least six sources, including at least two primary sources. Test every source for authority, accuracy, currency and purpose, and drop any that fail. Keep quotation, paraphrase and your own comments apart in your notes, and cite every borrowed word and idea in MLA style, in the sentence and in the works cited list. Let your thesis, not your sources, organize the paper. Work through the checkpoints on the four-week schedule: proposal, annotated bibliography, outline, draft, revision, and the final paper. The parent signs each checkpoint and grades the paper with the research paper rubric.

Grade with the research paper rubric; sign off each stage on the checkpoint sheet.

Optional: A Satire in Swift's Manner

ORIGINAL SATIRE Length: 500–800, plus a 150-word explanation · After unit 15 (Satire and Irony as Argument)

Write a short satire in the manner of Swift's A Modest Proposal about a harmless modern habit, such as always checking a phone or over-planning a free afternoon. Speak through a calm persona who proposes a reasonable-sounding remedy, and let the irony do the work. The target must be the habit or the policy, never a person or a group of people, and never anyone who is weak or poor, as Swift's target was the cruelty of the policies and never the children. Add a 150-word explanation naming your target and your techniques. The parent grades with the narrative rubric, scoring technique as satirical technique.

Grade with the narrative rubric.

Optional: A Speech or a Debate

SPEECH OR DEBATE Length: 5 to 7 minutes, or one debate round · After unit 25 (Speech and Debate)

Choose one. (a) Deliver your essay for prompt 7 or 8 as a persuasive speech of five to seven minutes, with one main message, your strongest evidence, notes instead of a script and a timed rehearsal. (b) Debate one round on a resolution your parent sets, with a parent or sibling as your opponent: build a case, ask and answer questions in cross-examination, flow your opponent's speech and refute it fairly. The parent uses the speaking checklist for a speech and the debate checklist for a round. The task is not scored on the 16-point rubric.

Use the speaking checklist or the debate checklist.

Optional: A Timed Essay

TIMED ANALYSIS Length: 45 minutes · After unit 27 (Capstone: Reading and Writing Across World Literature)

The parent chooses a short public-domain passage the course did not quote, in prose or verse, and a task such as "Explain how the writer uses a persona to make an argument." In 45 minutes: read the passage twice, plan for ten minutes with a claim and three pieces of evidence, write for about twenty-five, and keep five to check quotations and citations. Grade it with the pack's rubric, allowing for a first draft.

Debate checklist (the optional debate round)

Tick each line the round meets. It is a checklist for feedback, not a score. For a speech, use the speaking checklist with the English 9 prompts.

- States the resolution fairly and presents one clear case with two or three issues in the first speech.
- Supports each issue with evidence the other side can check, and names the source aloud.
- Restates the opponent's best point fairly before answering it, then answers it, supports the answer and says why it matters.
- Asks short, pointed questions in cross-examination, and answers the opponent's questions directly and briefly.
- Flows the opponent's speech, answers the points that matter and notices any point left unanswered.
- Keeps to the time limits for every speech and for cross-examination.
- Attacks the argument, never the person, waits for a turn to speak and thanks the opponent at the end.
- After the round, names the weakest answer and one change for next time.

Prompts: College Composition

Composition prompts practice the course's skills in order: the rhetorical situation, then sentences and revision, then argument, research and analysis. Use the student's own topics where a prompt allows it.

1. The rhetorical situation

SHORT ANALYSIS Length: 500–700 · After unit 1 (Writing for a Purpose)

Choose a piece of writing you met this week outside your studies: a letter, an advertisement, a news story, a set of instructions or a post. Identify its purpose, audience, context and genre. Then explain two choices the writer made (words, length, order, tone or format) because of that situation, and one choice you would change for a different audience.

2. Revision, before and after

REVISION WITH MEMO Length: Revised essay plus a 300-word memo · After units 12 (Revision as a Process); 14 (Paragraphs); 20 (Revising a Whole Passage)

Take an essay you wrote earlier in the course. Revise it from large to small: test the thesis, reorder or cut paragraphs, develop the thinnest paragraph with evidence, then edit sentences. Hand in both versions and a memo that names your three biggest changes and why each one helps a reader.

3. An argument about your community

ARGUMENT Length: 800–1,000 · After units 13 (Thesis Statements); 15 (Organization and Reasoning Patterns); 17 (Evidence and Support); 30 (Reasoning and Fallacies)

Take a position on a question your town, church, club or family is actually deciding. State an arguable thesis, support it with at least three reasons and specific evidence, and answer the strongest objection fairly. Before you hand it in, check your reasoning against the fallacies in unit 30 and remove any you find.

4. Rhetorical analysis of a speech

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS Length: 900–1,200 · After units 28 (Rhetorical Appeals); 29 (Language, Tone and Structure)

Choose a speech or essay written to persuade a particular audience (the parent may approve the choice). Analyze how the writer appeals to that audience through credibility, emotion and reasoning, and how tone, figurative language and structure support those appeals. Your thesis should say what the writer does and why it works or does not, not whether you agree.

5. Testing an argument

ARGUMENT ANALYSIS Length: 800–1,000 · After units 30 (Reasoning and Fallacies); 31 (Analyzing Arguments and Evidence)

Choose an editorial or opinion column. Identify its main claim, its evidence and the assumptions the argument needs. Evaluate the reasoning: where is it strongest, where does it rely on a fallacy or on evidence that fails the tests of unit 17? End with what the writer would need to add to persuade a skeptical reader.

6. Synthesis: sources in conversation

SYNTHESIS Length: 1,000–1,200 · After unit 23 (Integrating Sources)

Read three sources that take different positions on one question. Write an essay that makes your own claim about the question and puts the sources in conversation: where they agree, where they disagree and why. Use quotation, paraphrase and summary, each at least once, with signal phrases, and keep your own voice in control of every paragraph.

7. Research essay

RESEARCH Length: 1,500–2,000 with works cited · After units 21 (Research and Sources); 22 (Evaluating Sources); 23 (Integrating Sources); 24 (Plagiarism and Documentation); 25 (MLA Style); 26 (APA Style)

Write a research essay on a question you choose and the parent approves. Use at least five sources, including at least two print or scholarly sources, and evaluate each against the five criteria of unit 22. Hand in a research log, an annotated bibliography, the drafts and the final essay, documented in MLA or APA style.

8. Timed essay

TIMED ARGUMENT Length: 40 minutes · After units 13 (Thesis Statements); 14 (Paragraphs); 17 (Evidence and Support)

With no notes, in 40 minutes, respond to this prompt: 'Some people say that the most important skill a person can learn in school is how to learn on one's own. Do you agree or disagree?' Plan for 5 minutes, write for 30 and proofread for 5. The parent may substitute any arguable question and repeat the exercise during the year.

Prompts: American Literature

American Literature prompts follow the course's periods. Each names works the course teaches; the student reads the work itself, not only the lessons. Works published before 1931 are in the U.S. public domain and free in online collections; a work marked (in copyright) needs a library copy or an authorized edition. This pack quotes none of the copyrighted works.

1. Douglass and the authenticating letters

LITERARY ANALYSIS Length: 900–1,200 · After unit 9 (Slavery, Reform, and the Woman Question)

Douglass's Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave (1845) appeared with prefaces by white abolitionists testifying that he wrote it. Why did the book need them? Analyze how Douglass's own voice and the scenes he chooses establish his authority beyond what the prefaces could give him.

2. The individual and society in Concord

COMPARISON Length: 1,000–1,200 · After unit 7 (Transcendentalism: Emerson, Thoreau, Fuller)

Compare Emerson's "Self-Reliance" with Thoreau's "Resistance to Civil Government" ("Civil Disobedience"). Each argues for the individual conscience against social pressure. How do they differ in what that conscience should do? Use at least three quotations from each.

3. Poe's method, tested

LITERARY ANALYSIS Length: 800–1,000 · After unit 8 (The Dark Romantics: Poe, Hawthorne, Melville)

In "The Philosophy of Composition" Poe claims he wrote "The Raven" by working backward from the effect he wanted. Test the claim against the poem: which of its features (refrain, meter, setting, the bird's one word) serve a single effect, and does anything in the poem resist his account?

4. Two poets, one problem

COMPARISON Length: 900–1,200 · After unit 10 (Whitman and Dickinson)

Set the opening of Whitman's "Song of Myself" beside Dickinson's "Because I could not stop for Death". Compare form (line, meter, stanza), the speaker and what each poem does with the self. What does each poet gain from the form the other avoided?

5. The ending of Huckleberry Finn

ARGUMENT Length: 1,000–1,200 · After unit 11 (Realism and Regionalism)

In the last chapters of Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Tom Sawyer turns Jim's escape into a game long after he knows Jim is legally free. Readers have argued ever since about whether the ending ruins the book or exposes something true. Take a side, use evidence from the novel's narration, and answer the other side's best point.

6. What the poem asks of the reader

COMPARISON Length: 800–1,000 · After unit 14 (Modernist Poetry)

Compare Frost's "Mending Wall" with Williams's "The Red Wheelbarrow". What does each poem leave unsaid, and what work does it ask the reader to do? Connect your reading to the course's account of how the modernists broke with earlier poetry.

7. Nick Carraway as narrator

LITERARY ANALYSIS Length: 1,000–1,200 · After unit 15 (Modernist Fiction and Drama)

Nick Carraway claims to be one of the few honest people he has known, and everything in The Great Gatsby reaches us through him, including scenes he did not see. Is he a reliable narrator? Argue your answer from at least three passages, and explain how your answer changes the way the novel judges Gatsby.

8. King's letter as argument

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS Length: 1,000–1,200 · After unit 17 (Postwar Poetry and Drama)

Analyze Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (1963; in copyright: read it in a library anthology or an authorized edition) as an argument addressed to a specific audience, the eight clergymen whose public statement it answers. How does King establish his authority, answer the charge that the demonstrations were badly timed, and use reasoning and emotion together? This prompt pairs with Composition units 28–31.

9. A movement in two works

RESEARCH Length: 1,500–2,000 with works cited · After units 4 (Puritan New England); 7 (Transcendentalism: Emerson, Thoreau, Fuller); 11 (Realism and Regionalism); 13 (The Harlem Renaissance); 14 (Modernist Poetry)

Choose one movement the course teaches (Puritan writing, Transcendentalism, Realism, the Harlem Renaissance or Modernism). Argue what its central claim was, and show how two works by different writers express or complicate it. Use at least three secondary sources, documented in MLA style.

Prompts: English Literature

English Literature prompts run from Beowulf to postcolonial writing, following the course's periods. Most works are free in public-domain collections; use a modern-English translation for Beowulf and an edition with glosses for Chaucer. A work marked (in copyright) needs a library copy or an authorized edition; this pack quotes none of the copyrighted works.

1. The heroic code in Beowulf

LITERARY ANALYSIS Length: 900–1,200 · After unit 3 (Old English Literature)

Beowulf praises the warrior who seeks glory. Does the poem also count its costs? Analyze two or three episodes (a boast, a fight, the ending) and argue what the poem finally values.

2. Chaucer's pilgrims

LITERARY ANALYSIS Length: 800–1,000 · After unit 4 (Geoffrey Chaucer)

Choose two portraits from the General Prologue of The Canterbury Tales. Show how the narrator's apparently innocent praise lets the reader see what he does not say. What does the gap between narrator and reader make the portraits do?

3. A Shakespeare tragedy

LITERARY ANALYSIS Length: 1,000–1,200 · After unit 7 (William Shakespeare)

Choose Hamlet, Othello, King Lear or Macbeth. Argue how the hero's downfall grows from a quality that also makes him admirable, using at least one soliloquy or major speech as evidence.

4. Donne's compasses

CLOSE READING Length: 700–900 · After unit 8 (Donne, Jonson and the Early Seventeenth Century)

Read the compass conceit in "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" as an argument. What are the two things compared, what does each part of the instrument stand for, and what does the comparison prove to the speaker's wife? Why a drawing instrument and not a conventional image of love?

5. Milton's Satan

ARGUMENT Length: 1,000–1,200 · After unit 9 (John Milton)

Readers have long argued about whether Satan is the hero of Paradise Lost. Using his speeches in Book One ("The mind is its own place...") and his temptation of Eve in Book Nine, argue how the poem shapes our response to him.

6. The mask in A Modest Proposal

LITERARY ANALYSIS Length: 800–1,000 · After unit 11 (The Eighteenth Century)

Swift's "A Modest Proposal" speaks through a calm, reasonable projector. Separate the speaker from the author: what does the speaker believe, what does Swift want the reader to conclude, and which details let you tell them apart?

7. Romantic time and memory

COMPARISON Length: 1,000–1,200 · After units 12 (The First Romantics); 13 (The Second Romantics and Romantic Prose)

Compare Wordsworth's "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey" with Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" or Shelley's "Ozymandias". What does each poem say about what lasts (memory, art, power) and what time takes away?

8. The Duke speaks

CLOSE READING Length: 800–1,000 · After unit 14 (Victorian Poetry)

In Browning's "My Last Duchess" the Duke of Ferrara shows an envoy his late wife's portrait. Show how the Duke reveals more than he means to, and how the dramatic monologue lets the reader judge him without the poet commenting at all.

9. Writing back to Conrad

COMPARISON Length: 1,200–1,500 · After units 16 (Modernism); 18 (Commonwealth and Postcolonial Writing in English)

In a 1975 lecture, Chinua Achebe criticized Conrad's Heart of Darkness for its picture of Africa and Africans. Read Things Fall Apart (1958; in copyright: use a library copy) beside Conrad's novella. How does Achebe's portrait of Igbo society answer Conrad's? Consider narration, language and what each book lets its African characters say.

10. Orwell's officer

LITERARY ANALYSIS Length: 700–900 · After unit 17 (After Modernism: Britain and Ireland)

In Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant" (1936; in copyright in the U.S.: use a library anthology) an officer in Burma shoots an elephant to avoid looking foolish. How does the essay turn one incident into an argument about imperialism? Then test it against the advice on plain style in Orwell's "Politics and the English Language" (1946; also in copyright, library copy): does the earlier essay practice what the later one recommends?

Prompts: Analyzing and Interpreting Literature

Analyzing and Interpreting Literature teaches close reading of passages. These prompts turn its procedures into writing: tone, speaker, figure, form, structure, narration, style and stagecraft, ending with a timed passage analysis.

1. Tone against matter

CLOSE READING Length: 700–900 · After unit 4 (Tone, and the Tone Lexicon)

Read the opening paragraphs of Swift's "A Modest Proposal". Describe the tone with precise words from the unit's tone lexicon, then show how the gap between the calm manner and the horrifying matter makes the satire work.

2. Write a dramatic monologue

CREATIVE WITH COMMENTARY Length: 20–30 lines plus 400 words · After unit 5 (Speaker, Voice and Persona)

Write a dramatic monologue in which a speaker, addressing a silent listener at a critical moment, reveals more than he or she intends (Browning's "My Last Duchess" is the model). Then write a commentary explaining the technique: where the reader sees past the speaker, and how.

3. Two sonnet structures

COMPARISON Length: 800–1,000 · After unit 9 (Poetry: Structure and Argument)

Compare Shakespeare's Sonnet 29 and Sonnet 73. Sonnet 29 turns on "yet" at line nine; Sonnet 73 offers three parallel images and draws its conclusion in the couplet. Show how each structure carries its argument, and which you find more persuasive.

4. Form in Harlem Shadows

CLOSE READING Length: 700–900 · After unit 8 (Poetry: Closed and Open Form)

Claude McKay's "Harlem Shadows" runs to three six-line stanzas, each ending "from street to street". Show how the repetition, the stanza shape and the rhyme shape what the poem says. Why might McKay have chosen a closed form for this subject?

5. Two openings

COMPARISON Length: 800–1,000 · After unit 10 (Prose: Narration and Point of View)

Compare the opening of Austen's Pride and Prejudice with the opening of Conrad's Heart of Darkness. Identify the point of view each uses, and show how each first page teaches the reader how to read the rest of the book.

6. Gradgrind built from words

CLOSE READING Length: 700–900 · After unit 11 (Prose: Character, Scene, Style)

Read the first two chapters of Dickens's Hard Times. Show how Dickens builds Thomas Gradgrind through adjective choice, repeated sentence patterns and a family of related metaphors. Is Gradgrind flat or round on this evidence?

7. Testimony and satire

COMPARISON Length: 1,000–1,200 · After unit 12 (Nonfiction: Rhetoric and the Essay)

Set a passage from Equiano's narrative (1789) beside Swift's "A Modest Proposal". Both protest cruelty, one by testimony, one by satire. Compare how each mode works on a reader, and argue which is the stronger argument for its purpose.

8. A mind under pressure

COMPARISON Length: 1,000–1,200 · After units 13 (Drama: Structure and Dramatic Irony); 14 (Drama: Soliloquy, Aside, Stagecraft)

Compare Hamlet's "To be, or not to be" with Faustus's soliloquy in his last hour (Marlowe, Doctor Faustus). How does each playwright use the soliloquy to dramatize a mind under pressure: rhythm, questions, time, the turn of thought?

9. Timed passage analysis

TIMED CLOSE READING Length: 40 minutes · After unit 21 (Capstone: Running the Procedure Cold)

The parent chooses an unseen passage of 15–30 lines (poem, prose or drama) from any period. In 40 minutes, with no notes, the student writes an analysis using the course's procedure: settle the speaker and situation, then tone, figures, form and structure, and end with what the passage means and how it makes that meaning. Repeat during the year with different genres.

Model answers: English 9

These essays were written for this pack to show what each score looks like. They are examples to discuss with the student, not texts to copy. Each is scored criterion by criterion with the matching rubric, and every quotation is from a public-domain text the course reads. Prompts 1, 4 and 7 have a model at each score level; the others have a score-4 model and a note on what lowers the score.

Prompt 1: A Turning Point

Score 4 (Strong): "The Rope at the Seven-Foot Line" (Maya, 803 words, 16 of 16)

The rope floated at the seven-foot line like a long, lazy snake, and on the far side of it everyone I knew was laughing.

I was eleven, and it was the second week of day camp at the town pool. The rule was simple. Anyone who passed the swim test got a red wristband and could cross the rope to the deep end, where the diving board stood and the good games happened. Anyone who hadn't stayed in the shallow end with the little kids and the foam noodles. For nine days I had stayed with the noodles.

On the tenth day, Ms. Ortega, the head lifeguard, walked over and crouched at the edge where I was standing in my usual spot. She had a whistle on a green cord and a sunburned nose. "Maya," she said, "the test is two lengths of the lane and then you tread water for one minute. You've done the swimming part in lessons. I watched you."

"In lessons the bottom is right there," I said.

"The bottom is right there on the test, too, for the first length," she said. "It just goes away slowly." She smiled. "Nobody is making you. But I'll be standing right here."

Everyone has a thing they say no to so many times that no stops being an answer and turns into a habit. Mine was water I couldn't stand in. I looked across the rope. My cousin Dani was sitting on the edge of the deep end with her feet dangling, and she gave me a small wave that said nothing, which was kind of her. Then I heard myself say, "Okay. Now. Before I change my mind."

I lowered myself into the lane. The water was cold enough that my stomach jumped, and the whole pool smelled sharply of chlorine. I pushed off the wall. The first length was easy, just as Ms. Ortega promised, and I counted my kicks the way my swim teacher had taught me: one, two, three, breathe. My hand slapped the far wall, and I turned.

The second length was the one that mattered. About halfway down, my toes reached for the bottom and found nothing, only cool water pulling at my ankles. For one second the whole world narrowed to the black line painted on the floor far below me, which seemed to be sliding away. My arms stopped. My chin dipped. I swallowed a mouthful of water that tasted like a penny.

"Kick, Maya!" Ms. Ortega called from the edge, her voice flat and calm, as if I had asked her what time it was. "You're floating. Your body already knows how. Kick."

So I kicked. My legs felt like somebody else's legs, but they kept going, and the black line stopped sliding and slowly began to come toward me. I reached the wall, grabbed the gutter with both hands, and hung there coughing, my heart banging against my ribs.

"One minute of treading," Ms. Ortega said. "Whenever you're ready."

I let go of the wall.

Sixty seconds is not very long. On a clock it is nothing. In the middle of the deep lane it was the longest minute I have ever lived through. I could hear the splash of the diving board, a radio playing somewhere, and my own breathing, loud and ragged. My legs circled and circled. Halfway through, I noticed something odd: I was no longer thinking about the bottom. I was thinking about my hands, pressing the water down in small, steady scoops, and it was holding me up. The water I had been afraid of was doing the work, and all I had to do was keep my part of the deal.

"Time," she said, and blew one short note on her whistle.

She fastened the red wristband around my wrist herself. It was damp and a little too tight, and I did not take my eyes off it for the rest of the afternoon. When I ducked under the rope, Dani whooped so loudly that two lifeguards looked up.

I did not turn into a swimmer that day. I still can't dive well, and I still get a small jolt in my stomach every time my feet leave the bottom. But I learned that fear can behave like that rope. It looks like a wall, and it is mostly a line somebody drew. Since then, when I want to say no out of pure habit, I picture the black line sliding away, and I think of how the water held me once I stopped fighting it. Then I ask myself a different question: is this a no that I mean, or just a no that I know?

The wristband went through the wash twice and faded to pink. I keep it in my desk drawer.

Criterion	Score	Why
Focus and situation	4	The first sentence puts the rope in view, and by the second paragraph the reader knows who, where and what is at stake (the wristband and the deep end). Every scene, from Ms. Ortega's offer to the minute of treading water, leads to the one moment.
Narrative technique	4	The story runs quickly through the nine days of noodles and slows down for the second length and the treading minute, which together take the most space. Dialogue ('Kick, Maya!'), the penny taste of the water and the sliding black line show the fear instead of naming it.
Organization and sequence	4	The hook is an image, the events follow in order with clear time markers ('On the tenth day', 'About halfway down', 'Whenever you're ready'), and the close reflects on what the rope and the habit of saying no came to mean.
Style and conventions	4	Word choices are specific ('sunburned nose', 'long, lazy snake') and sentence lengths vary, with the short 'I let go of the wall' placed on its own. Dialogue is punctuated correctly and the voice sounds like an eleven-year-old looking back.

Score 3 (Competent): "Across the Deep End" (Ethan, 559 words, 12 of 16)

I was eleven the summer I finally crossed the rope at the pool, and I still remember how my knees felt like they were made of jelly.

All summer, my friends from day camp were allowed in the deep end because they had passed the swim test. I had not. Every afternoon I stood in the shallow part and pretended I liked it there. I told people the deep end was boring. I told them the water was too cold over there. Really I was afraid, because the first time I tried the test in June I got to the middle and panicked and grabbed the lane rope, and a lifeguard had to tell me to let go.

One afternoon in August my friend Jake came over to the shallow end. "Ethan, you have to try again," he said. "There's a game with a big ball and we need another person."

"I can't," I said. "I'll just fail again."

"You won't," said Jake. "I'll swim next to you outside the lane. If you get tired, you grab the wall."

I thought about it for a long time. Before I walked over, I stood on the pool deck for about five minutes. The concrete was hot under my feet, and I could smell sunscreen and french fries from the snack bar. Jake kept asking if I was okay. My hands were shaking, so I tried to put them in my pockets, which did

not work because swim trunks do not have pockets. Then I walked up to the lifeguard, whose name was Mr. Cole, and I said I wanted to take the test again. He nodded and blew his whistle to start the clock.

I pushed off the wall and started to swim. The water was cold and I could hear Jake splashing beside me. When I got to the middle of the pool my feet could not find the bottom and I felt the panic coming back, just like in June. My chest got tight and my arms got heavy. But I heard Jake say, "Keep going, you're almost there," and I kept kicking. I did not grab the rope this time. I touched the far wall and I was out of breath.

Then I had to tread water for a minute, which was the hardest part. My legs were tired and I kept thinking I would sink. My legs burned and the water slapped at my chin. Mr. Cole counted down from ten at the end, and when he said zero I almost cried.

"You passed," he said. He gave me the red wristband. I put it on and Jake gave me a high five.

For the rest of the day I played the ball game in the deep end. We threw the ball back and forth and I laughed a lot. It was the best afternoon of the summer.

After that day I thought differently about being afraid. I learned that when you are scared of something it usually looks a lot bigger than it is, and that you can do hard things if you try again. It also helped to have a friend to swim next to me. Now when I have to do something that scares me, like speaking in class, I remember the deep end and I tell myself I already did something harder.

Criterion	Score	Why
Focus and situation	3	The moment (the second try at the swim test) is clear, and the stakes are set up in the second paragraph. The June failure and the line about telling people the deep end was boring slow the start, but they mostly serve the story.
Narrative technique	3	There is dialogue with Jake and some feeling in the middle of the pool ('my chest got tight'), but the key moment is partly told ('I felt the panic coming back') rather than shown with sights and sounds. The treading-water minute gets about as much space as the ball game afterward.
Organization and sequence	3	The beginning, middle and end are clear and the transitions work ('One afternoon in August', 'Then', 'For the rest of the day'). The reflection in the last paragraph is general: it says fear looks bigger than it is without tying that idea to one image from the scene.
Style and conventions	3	Sentences are clear and the voice is steady, but many are short and alike in length, and phrases such as 'the best afternoon of the summer' are stock. Dialogue is punctuated correctly, and the few slips (long run-together sentences in the swimming paragraph) do not block meaning.

Score 2 (Developing): "My Summer at the Pool" (Carlos, 319 words, 8 of 16)

This summer I went to the pool every day. It was a big pool with a shallow end and a deep end and a rope between them. I was scared of the deep end so I stayed in the shallow end. In June I went to the pool with my cousin and we played games. In July it was really hot and I went to the pool alot and I got a sunburn. My mom put lotion on me but I still got burned on my back.

My friends could go to the deep end because they passed a swim test. They got a red wristband. I wanted a red wristband too, but I was scared to take the test. I watched my friends jump off the diving board and I was jealous. They said come on Carlos you can do it. I said maybe tomorrow.

> Then in August I decided to take the test. The lifeguard said swim two laps and then float for one minute. I swam the two laps and it was hard. I was tired. then I floated for one minute and I passed the test. I was very happy and the lifeguard gave me a red wristband.
>
> In August the weather was nice. My mom made sandwiches and we ate them at the picnic table. After lunch we had to rest for thirty minutes. The pool had a snack bar and sometimes I got a popsicle. After I passed the test I went to the deep end with my friends. We jumped off the diving board and we played with a ball. It was so fun. I went to the deep end every day after that until the summer was over.
>
> I learned that you should not be afraid of things. If you try hard you can do anything. This was a important thing that happened to me and I will never forget it.

Criterion	Score	Why
Focus and situation	2	The essay covers a whole summer (June, July, August, a sunburn, a cousin) instead of one moment. The test appears only in the third paragraph, so the turning point is buried in a run of events.
Narrative technique	2	Nearly everything is told. The test itself, the most important part, gets three short sentences ('I swam the two laps and it was hard'), and there is almost no sensory detail. The only dialogue is reported speech with no quotation marks.
Organization and sequence	2	The order is clear, but every part gets the same weight, and the ending states a general lesson ('you should not be afraid of things') without reflecting on the specific moment.
Style and conventions	2	Wording is repetitive ('I went to the pool'), and there are frequent errors: 'alot', a missing capital after a period ('then I floated'), 'a important', and dialogue without quotation marks or commas. They slow the reader but do not block meaning.

Score 1 (Beginning): "The Pool" (Brianna, 67 words, 5 of 16)

> Last summer I go to the pool. It was fun. I was scared of the deep end. my friends was in the deep end. I took a test and I pass it. The lifeguard give me a wristband it was red. then we played a game. It was hot out. We got ice cream after. My mom pick me up at 5. I was happy that day.

Criterion	Score	Why
Focus and situation	1	There is no single moment, only a short list of events (the test, a game, ice cream, a ride home) with no clear point about why any of it mattered.
Narrative technique	1	This is summary only. There is no dialogue, no sensory detail and no slowing down at the test, which gets one short sentence.
Organization and sequence	1	The events are only loosely ordered and the essay just stops after 'I was happy that day'. It has no hook and no reflection on what the moment meant.
Style and conventions	2	Tense shifts ('I go', 'I pass it', 'give') and agreement errors ('friends was') appear throughout, along with missing capitals ('my friends', 'then'). Most of the meaning still comes through, so this one criterion earns a 2 and the total is 5.

Prompt 2: Suspense or Irony in a Story

Score 4 (Strong): "What Jacobs Holds Back" (Tomas, 789 words, 16 of 16)

W. W. Jacobs's "The Monkey's Paw" is a ghost story in which the ghost never appears. The reader never sees what stands outside the door, and that missing picture is the engine of the story's suspense. Jacobs builds suspense in three ways: he plants a warning early and lets the Whites laugh at it, he keeps the reader waiting inside a slow, polite delivery of terrible news, and he ends the story just before the answer arrives.

The first source of suspense is the warning. When Sergeant-Major Morris explains the paw, he says the old fakir "wanted to show that fate ruled people's lives, and that those who interfered with it did so to their sorrow" (Jacobs, part 1). That sentence works like a rule in a game. The reader learns that sorrow is the price of wishing, but the Whites, who are busy teasing each other, do not take it in. Their son Herbert even jokes that Mr. White will find "something horrible squatting up on top of the wardrobe watching you as you pocket your ill-gotten gains" (part 1). Herbert is trying to be funny, but because the reader has just heard the warning, his joke reads like a forecast. Mr. White's own wish gets a small proof, too: he says the paw "twisted in my hand like a snake" (part 1), and his wife puts it down to fancy. The reader has no such comfort. The family is comfortable and the reader is not, and that gap between what they know and what we know keeps us uneasy through the rest of the evening.

The second source is delay. In part 2, a stranger from the company comes to the house, and Jacobs makes him hesitate: "Three times he paused at the gate, and then walked on again." The repeated pausing is not about the stranger's nerves. Jacobs could have let him blurt out the news, and the scene would have been over in a sentence. Instead the stranger stoops to pick a piece of cotton from his trousers and stays silent, and every added detail holds the reader at the gate with him. It stretches out the minutes before the news so that the reader can begin to guess it, while Mrs. White, thinking only of the two hundred pounds, cannot. When he finally admits that Herbert is "Badly hurt," the visitor adds that "he is not in any pain." Mrs. White thanks God for that, and then Jacobs writes that "the sinister meaning of the assurance dawned upon her." The narrator slows the moment down by telling us what she realizes only after the reader has already realized it. Then the price of the paw arrives in the plainest possible way, when the visitor names the compensation: "Two hundred pounds." The wish has been granted, and the cost is the one thing nobody said out loud.

The third source of suspense is the ending, where Jacobs finally refuses to show. By part 3, the reader has seen a wish go wrong once, so the second wish is frightening before anything happens. Jacobs then lets the fear come in through sound. The first knock is "so quiet and stealthy as to be scarcely audible," and the knocks grow until a "fusillade of knocks reverberated through the house." Because we cannot see, we hear the knocking as loudly as Mr. White does. He is crawling on the floor, looking for the paw, and the narrator tells us only that he "frantically breathed his third and last wish." The story does not say what the wish is. A moment later, "The knocking ceased suddenly," and the open door reveals only "a quiet and deserted road." The reader has to supply both the wish and the thing that was knocking, and what a reader imagines is usually worse than what an author could print.

A reader might object that the real horror is Herbert's death, which happens before the knocking begins, so the ending is only an echo. It is true that the loss of Herbert is the darkest event. But grief alone would be sadness, not suspense. Suspense needs a question that stays open, and the knocking supplies one: what is on the other side of the door, and what will Mrs. White do when she opens it? The final lines answer only half of that question, and the unanswered half is what lingers.

> **Jacobs shows how much a story can do by withholding. A warning that no one heeds, a stranger who cannot make himself say the news, and a door that opens on an empty road all teach the reader to dread what comes next, and the story stops before the dread can be settled.**

Criterion	Score	Why
Thesis and focus	4	The first paragraph makes a claim a careful reader could argue with (suspense comes from the warning, the delay and the withheld ending) and names the three moves the essay will follow. Each body paragraph stays on one of them.
Evidence and analysis	4	Quotations come from all three parts of the story and each is introduced, cited and explained: Herbert's joke is read as a forecast, and the three pauses at the gate are read as delay. The fourth paragraph also answers the counterclaim that Herbert's death, not the knocking, is the source of horror.
Organization	4	The paragraphs follow the story's own order and the topic sentences ('The first source', 'The second', 'The third') mark the path. The conclusion adds the idea of the open question rather than repeating the thesis.
Style and mechanics	4	The essay stays in the present tense for the story, varies its sentences, and cites by part number without inventing page numbers. Quotations are punctuated correctly and woven into the writer's own sentences.

What lowers the score: A thesis such as 'Jacobs uses suspense in The Monkey's Paw' names a topic instead of making a claim, which usually earns a 2 in Thesis and focus. Retelling the plot from the wishes to the knocks, with quotations dropped in and no explanation of how each one builds suspense, lowers Evidence and analysis to a 2, and quotations that all come from one part of the story hold it at a 3. Mixing the tenses ('Mr. White wishes… then he ran') and forgetting to cite the part of the story are the most common slips in Style and mechanics. A counterclaim answered in one line, or not at all, keeps an otherwise strong essay at a 3.

Prompt 3: A Poem's Imagery and Form

Score 4 (Strong): "Plain Comparisons, Surprising Praise" (Priya, 629 words, 16 of 16)

In Sonnet 130, Shakespeare seems to insult the woman he loves, but the poem is really praising her. Through a list of plain, unflattering images and a sonnet's closing couplet, the poem argues that love does not need exaggerated comparisons to be real.

The poem begins by refusing the usual love-poem images. The speaker says, "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun; / Coral is far more red, than her lips red" (lines 1-2). A love poem would normally call a woman's eyes suns and her lips coral, and the poem names exactly those two comparisons only to take them away. Each line turns a familiar compliment into a flat, almost scientific observation. The imagery continues in the same way: "If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun; / If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head" (lines 3-4). The comparisons are comic because they are so literal. Instead of golden hair, the speaker pictures wires, which are hard and dark. The word "dun" works the same way: it names a dull grayish brown, and the poem sets it against the pure white of snow, so the comparison sounds almost like a measurement taken in a laboratory. Shakespeare turns the standard images of beauty inside out so that the reader begins to laugh at the habit of exaggerating.

The second and third quatrains keep the list going but shift from sight to the other senses. The speaker has seen "roses damask'd, red and white, / But no such roses see I in her cheeks" (lines 5-6), then moves to smell and sound, admitting that music has "a far more pleasing sound" than her voice (line 10). By line 11, he stops comparing and simply tells the truth: "I grant I never saw a goddess go; / My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground" (lines 11-12). The image has changed here. The earlier lines compared her to things like sun, snow and roses, and these lines compare her to a goddess, then put her firmly on the earth. The steady rhythm of the iambic pentameter, with its ten-syllable lines and its rhyme pattern, helps this plain voice. The calm beat makes each denial sound like an honest report from a person with nothing to hide.

All of this prepares for the turn. A sonnet usually builds its idea across three four-line quatrains and then shifts in the last two lines, the couplet. Here the shift is sudden and warm: "And yet by heaven, I think my love as rare, / As any she belied with false compare" (lines 13-14). The couplet rhymes, which gives it a final click of certainty, and the word "And yet" reverses the whole poem. To "belie" is to describe falsely, so the speaker says that other women have been misrepresented by false comparisons. His love is "as rare" as any of theirs, and he can say so without the borrowed images. The twelve lines of denial now look like a form of loyalty, and on a second reading each earlier insult becomes a small proof of honesty.

The images and the form work together. The imagery removes every borrowed compliment, one by one, and the quatrains stack those removals until the reader is waiting for the poem to say something harsh. The couplet then gives the opposite: a confident statement of love. Because the poem has been so plain until the last two lines, the praise sounds earned. This is why the poem is not an insult: an insult would try to lower a person, and this speaker only lowers the false pictures that stand between him and her. Sonnet 130 means that real affection can look directly at a person's ordinary body and still call it rare.

Criterion	Score	Why
Thesis and focus	4	The thesis names the poem's meaning (love does not need exaggerated comparisons) and the devices that build it (plain images and the couplet). Every paragraph returns to that claim.
Evidence and analysis	4	Lines are quoted with slashes for line breaks and with line numbers, and each quotation is explained: the 'wires' image is read as hard and dark, and 'And yet' is read as reversing the poem. The essay also explains the word 'belied' in plain terms.
Organization	4	The essay moves from the opening images, to the other senses and the quatrains, to the couplet, and ends by showing how imagery and form cooperate instead of repeating the thesis.
Style and mechanics	4	The writing is plain and exact, uses present tense, varies its sentences and punctuates the quotations and line citations correctly.

What lowers the score: A thesis such as 'Sonnet 130 uses imagery and form' names devices without saying what they mean, and that drops Thesis and focus to a 2. Listing the comparisons (eyes, lips, hair, cheeks) without explaining why they are funny or what they build toward leaves Evidence and analysis at a 2, and explaining the imagery but never the form (the quatrains, the rhyme or the turn in the couplet) holds the essay at a 3. Forgetting the slashes for line breaks, or quoting a long block without comment, are the usual mechanical slips. Calling the poem an insult, with no mention of the final couplet that reverses it, is the most common misreading.

Prompt 4: Who Is Responsible

Score 4 (Strong): "The Stars Set the Trap, but Haste Springs It" (Imani, 817 words, 16 of 16)

> The Prologue of Romeo and Juliet tells the audience that the lovers will die, and many readers conclude that the play is about fate or about a feud that nobody could stop. I disagree. The feud makes the lovers' situation dangerous, and chance delivers one cruel delay, but the person who actually brings about each disaster is a young person in a hurry. Romeo and Juliet are most responsible for their own deaths because they rush every choice, and each time an adult or a friend tells them to wait, they do not. I will follow that haste through Acts 2, 3 and 5.
>
> The pattern starts in Act 2, before anything has gone wrong. Only hours after meeting, the lovers exchange vows in the garden, and Juliet is the first to see the danger. She tells Romeo that their promise is "too rash, too unadvis'd, too sudden" (Shakespeare 2.2). Notice that she says it herself, and she is right. A few scenes later, Romeo asks Friar Lawrence to marry them the same day, saying, "O let us hence; I stand on sudden haste" (2.3). The Friar answers with the play's clearest warning: "Wisely and slow; they stumble that run fast" (2.3). The Friar later adds, "These violent delights have violent ends" (2.6). A character who is wise and a character who is in love both name the problem. The lovers hear it and go on, so by the end of Act 2 the play has told us what will destroy them.
>
> The second pattern appears in Act 3, when Romeo's haste turns from love to anger. After Tybalt kills Mercutio, Romeo has just tried to stop the fight, and it would be reasonable for him to appeal to the Prince. Instead he cries, "And fire-ey'd fury be my conduct now!" (3.1). The Friar's warning came only a few scenes earlier, so the lesson was available and Romeo had already heard it. The word "conduct" means guide, and Romeo is choosing rage as his guide. He kills Tybalt within a few lines, and the moment he does, he says, "O, I am fortune's fool!" (3.1). This is a revealing sentence. He has just made a choice in a few seconds, and he immediately blames fortune for it. The play lets us see him giving away his own responsibility. Because of that single act of speed, he is banished, and every later problem, including Juliet's forced engagement to Paris, grows from it.
>
> The final pattern is in Act 5, where the cost of haste is greatest. Romeo hears from his servant that Juliet is dead. Balthasar sees how upset he is and begs him, "I do beseech you sir, have patience" (5.1). Romeo does not take the advice. He announces, "Then I defy you, stars!" (5.1), and plans to ride to Verona that night. He does not wait to hear from Friar Lawrence, and he does not send a question to anyone. If he had waited even a day, he would have learned that Juliet was alive. His line also matters because he is not blaming the stars here, he is defying them, which means he thinks the decision is his. He is right, and the decision is the wrong one.
>
> The strongest counterclaim is that the feud is the real cause. The Prologue names the "ancient grudge" (Prologue), Mercutio curses "both your houses" as he dies (3.1), and at the end the Prince tells the fathers, "See what a scourge is laid upon your hate" (5.3). I agree that the feud explains why the lovers must marry in secret, and the adults deserve blame for the hatred. But a feud is a condition, and haste is the action. The feud had simmered for years, and the play's fatal turns come only when Romeo chooses fury over patience and when he chooses despair over waiting. The feud also does not explain why Romeo ignores Balthasar. The grudge set the trap, but the lovers walked into it at a run.
>
> A reader could also point to chance, since Friar John is delayed by a quarantine and the Friar's letter never reaches Romeo. That delay is real, and the Friar himself groans, "Unhappy fortune!" (5.2). Yet a letter that arrives a day late is fatal only if Romeo refuses to wait a day. Balthasar offers him patience, the Friar's plan has hours of margin built into it, and Romeo takes none of it. Chance supplied the gap, and haste walked straight through it.

> The play ends with the Prince saying that "never was a story of more woe," but a story of woe is not the same thing as a story of fate. Romeo and Juliet could have been warned, and they were warned, three times and by three people. Fate may write the Prologue, but the characters write every scene after it. Their deaths belong first to their haste.

Criterion	Score	Why
Thesis and focus	4	The thesis names one main cause (the lovers' haste) and says how it differs from fate and the feud. Every body paragraph gives a stage of that haste (Act 2, Act 3, Act 5) and the counterclaim section stays tied to it.
Evidence and analysis	4	Lines come from the Prologue and Acts 2, 3 and 5, with the scene named for each, and each is explained, for example the reading of 'conduct' as 'guide' and of 'fortune's fool' as Romeo giving away responsibility. The strongest counterclaim, the feud, is stated with its own quotations and answered fairly (a feud is a condition, haste is the action).
Organization	4	The opening states the claim, the body follows the play's order, and the answer to the counterclaim comes after the evidence. The conclusion adds the point that the lovers were warned 'three times' instead of just repeating the thesis.
Style and mechanics	4	Sentences are varied and precise ('the grudge set the trap, but the lovers walked into it at a run'), the tense is present throughout, and every quotation is cited by act and scene in the same form.

Score 3 (Competent): "Haste Is the Real Villain" (Kenji, 500 words, 12 of 16)

> In Romeo and Juliet, there are many things that cause the deaths at the end, but the most responsible is the lovers' haste. They fall in love and get married very fast, and they make quick choices without thinking about what could happen. This essay will show that Romeo and Juliet's haste is the main cause of their deaths.
>
> One example of haste is in Act 2. Juliet says the vow is "too rash, too unadvis'd, too sudden" (Shakespeare 2.2). This shows that even Juliet thinks they are moving too fast. Then Romeo goes to Friar Lawrence and says, "O let us hence; I stand on sudden haste" (2.3). The Friar tells him, "Wisely and slow; they stumble that run fast" (2.3). This is important because it is a warning about what will happen, and Romeo does not listen.
>
> Another example is in Act 3 when Romeo kills Tybalt. Romeo says, "And fire-ey'd fury be my conduct now!" (3.1). He does not think about what will happen next, and so he gets banished. If he had stopped to think, he might not have killed Tybalt and everything after that would have been different. After he does it he says that he is "fortune's fool," which shows he knows he messed up.
>
> The third example is in Act 5. Romeo hears that Juliet is dead and says, "Then I defy you, stars!" (5.1). He goes back to Verona without waiting to find out what really happened. If he had waited he would have found out that Juliet was not really dead. This is the biggest example of haste because it directly leads to both deaths.
>
> Some people might say it was fate, because the Prologue calls them "star-cross'd lovers" before the play even starts. I think this is a fair point, because the letter that does not get to Romeo seems like bad luck. But the stars only matter if Romeo ignores everything else, and he does. He could have waited for a message from the Friar and he did not, so the luck was only bad because he was in such a hurry.
>
> Some people might say that the feud is the main reason for the deaths. The Prologue says the families have an "ancient grudge" and the Prince says "See what a scourge is laid upon your hate" (5.3). It is true

> that the feud causes a lot of problems, like why Romeo and Juliet had to get married in secret. But the feud did not make Romeo kill Tybalt or drink the poison. He chose to do those things himself, so haste is still the main cause.
>
> In conclusion, the lovers' haste is the main cause of the deaths in Romeo and Juliet. Juliet and the Friar both warn about it in Act 2, Romeo's anger in Act 3 gets him banished, and his rush in Act 5 leads to the deaths. The feud and bad luck matter, but the lovers could have stopped them and did not.

Criterion	Score	Why
Thesis and focus	3	The thesis is clear and answers the prompt, and the body paragraphs support it. The introduction, however, only announces ('This essay will show') instead of telling the reader how haste outweighs the feud.
Evidence and analysis	3	There is accurate evidence from three acts, and the Act 2 and Act 5 quotations are explained. A few are left to speak for themselves, such as 'fire-ey'd fury', which is never explained, and 'fortune's fool', which appears without a speaker or scene. The answer to the feud is fair but short.
Organization	3	There is a clear opening, three body paragraphs in order, and a close. The transitions are mechanical ('One example', 'Another example', 'The third example'), and the conclusion mostly repeats the introduction.
Style and mechanics	3	The sentences are clear but repetitive ('This shows', 'This is important'), and a few citations are missing. Phrases such as 'he messed up' are too casual for the assignment, though no error blocks meaning.

Score 2 (Developing): "Why Romeo and Juliet Die" (Hannah, 319 words, 9 of 16)

> Romeo and Juliet is a play by Shakespeare. In the play a lot of things cause Romeo and Juliet to die. There is the feud and Romeo and Juliet being too fast and also bad luck. So I think everyone is a little bit responsible.
>
> In the beginning of the play the Capulets and the Montagues are fighting. Romeo goes to a party at Capulet's house and he sees Juliet and they fall in love. Then the next day they get married by Friar Lawrence in secret. This is because of the feud because they can't tell their parents. So the feud is a reason.
>
> Then Romeo's friend Mercutio gets killed by Tybalt and Romeo kills Tybalt and the Prince banishes him. Mercutio says "A plague o' both your houses" when he dies. This shows the feud is bad. Then Juliet's father says she has to marry Paris. So she goes to the Friar and he gives her a potion that makes her look dead. He sends a letter to Romeo but it doesn't get there because of the sickness. This is bad luck.
>
> Romeo hears Juliet is dead so he goes to the tomb and he kills Paris and then he drinks poison. Then Juliet wakes up and sees he is dead and kills herself. The Prince comes and the parents are sad and they stop fighting.
>
> Another thing is that Romeo and Juliet do everything too fast. Friar Lawrence says "Wisely and slow; they stumble that run fast." This shows they should go slower.
>
> I think the ending is the saddest part because the Friar tried to help them. The Nurse also helped them keep the secret. A lot of people helped and it still did not work out.

> **So all of these things caused Romeo and Juliet to die, the feud, the haste and the bad luck. Nobody is really more to blame than the others.**

Criterion	Score	Why
Thesis and focus	2	The thesis (‘everyone is a little bit responsible’) is exactly what the prompt asks the writer not to do, because it does not argue for one main cause. It also shifts partway: the final paragraph adds haste as an afterthought.
Evidence and analysis	2	Most of the essay retells the plot from the party to the tomb. The two quotations, ‘A plague o’ both your houses’ and ‘Wisely and slow’, have no speaker’s name for Mercutio or act and scene for either, and each gets one short sentence of explanation.
Organization	2	The paragraphs follow the order of the plot rather than a point, and the opening and conclusion are generic. The paragraph about haste arrives after the plot summary has ended.
Style and mechanics	3	Sentences are clear but repetitive, and they lean on ‘and’ and ‘then’. No citations in act and scene are given. Spelling and punctuation are mostly correct, so this criterion earns a 3 and the total is 9.

Score 1 (Beginning): “Romeo and Juliet” (Devon, 68 words, 5 of 16)

> **Romeo and Juliet is a sad play. Romeo and Juliet love each other but there families hate each other. Romeo kill Tybalt and he got banished then Juliet took a potion. Romeo thinks she is dead so he drink poison and then she kills herself to. Its really sad. The feud is bad becuase it make everybody sad. At the end the parents are sad and stop fighting.**

Criterion	Score	Why
Thesis and focus	1	No thesis is stated. The essay never says who or what is most responsible, so it does not answer the prompt.
Evidence and analysis	1	There is no quotation and no act or scene, only a brief retelling of events. Nothing explains how any event shows a cause.
Organization	1	The essay is one paragraph with no opening claim and no conclusion, and the events follow each other without links.
Style and mechanics	2	Errors include ‘there families’, ‘Romeo kill’, ‘drink poison’, ‘its’ for ‘it’s’ and ‘becuase’, but the meaning can still be followed, so the criterion earns a 2 and the total is 5.

Prompt 5: Hospitality or Heroism

Score 4 (Strong): "Guests, Gods and Hosts in the Odyssey" (Rosa, 814 words, 16 of 16)

> In the Odyssey, a stranger at the door is never just a stranger. Hospitality, or xenia, is a duty that the gods watch over, and the poem uses it to measure people: how a host treats a guest shows what kind of person the host is. The poem rewards those who protect guests and ruins those who abuse them, although it also leaves a few questions about whether Odysseus himself always plays fair. I will make this case in three points, drawing on the Phaeacians in Book 6, the Cyclops in Book 9 and the household on Ithaca in Books 14 and 16.
>
> The first point is that hospitality is a religious duty, not a polite habit. When Odysseus washes ashore, the Phaeacian princess Nausicaa stops her frightened maids and reminds them how to treat him, since "all strangers and beggars are from Zeus, and a little gift is dear" (Homer, bk. 6). She does not know who he is, and she does not need to. In her view, being a stranger is reason enough to help, because Zeus stands behind every guest. The same belief appears when Odysseus begs the Cyclops for mercy and reminds him that "Zeus is the avenger of suppliants and sojourners" (bk. 9). Odysseus is saying that a host who harms a guest will answer to the king of the gods. In both scenes the principle is the same, and what differs is whether the host accepts it.
>
> The second point is that the poem tests hosts by what they do, not by what they own. The Cyclops has plenty of food and flocks, yet he answers Odysseus with contempt: "pay no heed to Zeus" (bk. 9). Then he makes a cruel joke of the usual guest-gift by promising to eat the guest who calls himself Noman last, saying "that shall be thy gift." The word "gift" shows the point. In a normal house, the gift is a sign of respect, and here it is the opposite of respect. By contrast, the swineherd Eumaeus is a servant who owns almost nothing, and he welcomes a ragged stranger by saying, "it were an impious thing for me to slight a stranger" (bk. 14). He means that refusing a guest would be wrong in the eyes of the gods, even when the guest looks poor. Wealth does not decide who is a good host. The Phaeacians are generous in Book 8 when King Alcinous says, "let us give him a stranger's gift, as is meet" (bk. 8), but Eumaeus gives from far less. The poem lets the humblest host be the most faithful to xenia.
>
> The third point is that abusing guests brings punishment. The suitors who fill Odysseus's house are bad hosts to each other and to the beggar who arrives. Penelope rebukes their leader for forgetting the rule that the Cyclops also broke, asking Antinous why he has "no regard unto suppliants who have Zeus to witness" (bk. 16). Her question is a warning: the suitors have misused another man's hospitality, and the gods are watching. The suitors' crime is also a long one: they eat Odysseus's cattle night after night and mock a beggar in his own hall, so the poem ties their end to bad manners at the table, not to a single act. Later, when Odysseus reveals himself and the suitors die, the poem presents it as the answer to those broken duties. The Cyclops is blinded and the suitors are killed, so the pattern is the same: the guest-friendship that was ignored in the first half of the story is enforced in the second.
>
> Still, the poem asks readers to think twice. When Odysseus enters the Cyclops's cave, he tells us that he "waited to see the giant himself, and whether he would give me gifts as a stranger's due" (bk. 9), even though his men wanted to leave at once. Seen one way, he is a guest who is asking for what custom owes him, and the Cyclops breaks the rule first. Seen another way, he walks into a stranger's home, eats the cheese and stays for gifts, and his curiosity brings the disaster on his crew. Both readings can be defended. The suitors' punishment troubles me in a similar way, because the poem also describes the maids who are hanged along with the men. Some readers find that this is justice and some find it excessive. The poem does not say, and I think that is intended to make us uncomfortable.

> **The Odyssey does not treat hospitality as kindness alone. It treats it as a rule that holds the world together, and it measures every host by it. Nausicaa, Eumaeus and Penelope pass the test, the Cyclops and the suitors fail it, and Odysseus, who is both guest and host, shows how hard the rule can be to follow even for a hero.**

Criterion	Score	Why
Thesis and focus	4	The claim (hospitality is a duty overseen by the gods, and the poem uses it to sort people into rewarded and ruined) is arguable and is announced with a three-point plan. Each paragraph serves a point.
Evidence and analysis	4	Quotations come from Books 6, 8, 9, 14 and 16 and are each explained in the writer's own words, such as the reading of the Cyclops's 'gift' as the opposite of respect. The essay gives both readings of Odysseus in the cave and mentions the troubling hanging of the maids without pretending the poem settles it.
Organization	4	The essay is organized by points (duty, test, punishment) instead of by plot order, which is what the prompt asks. The conclusion adds the idea that the rule is hard even for a hero.
Style and mechanics	4	The tone is clear and fits a school essay, with varied sentences and present-tense verbs for the poem. Citations give the book number in the form (Homer, bk. 9) and quotations are short and integrated.

What lowers the score: Telling the story of the Cyclops, the Phaeacians and the suitors in the order they occur, with a quotation added to each, turns the essay into plot summary and usually lands at a 2 in Organization and in Evidence and analysis. Picking three episodes from one stretch of the poem (for example, all three from Books 9 to 12) weakens the case, and quotations that are left unexplained keep the essay at a 3. A thesis that says only that 'hospitality is important in the Odyssey' is a topic, not a claim. Skipping the troubling parts of the poem, such as the suitors' punishment or the hanging of the maids, leaves out the 'both readings' the prompt asks for.

Prompt 6: The Frame and the Reveal

Score 4 (Strong): "Keeping the Reader at the Door" (Priya, 818 words, 16 of 16)

Robert Louis Stevenson built his short book, Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, like a locked door. The reader stands outside with a lawyer named Utterson, collects clues, and is only allowed through when the lawyer reads two documents at the end. Stevenson uses this frame, together with the delayed reveal of the truth, to make the reader act as a detective, and to make the final confession land with more force than it could have in a plain narration. I will look at three parts of the book: the opening chapter, the will, and the final documents.

The opening chapter, "Story of the Door," sets up the first clue and the first refusal to answer. Enfield tells Utterson about a man who trampled a child, and he knows the man's name only as Hyde. When Enfield describes him, he cannot say what is wrong: "I never saw a man I so disliked, and yet I scarce know why." That sentence is a promise to the reader. Something about Hyde is awful, and no witness can explain it. Even the cheque that Hyde writes is signed with "a name that I can't mention." Stevenson plants a secret in the first pages and gives it to a character who will not tell. Enfield explains why when he says, "I feel very strongly about putting questions." The two friends turn away from the door and the reader must keep wondering, which is exactly where Stevenson wants us.

The second part is the will, in "Search for Mr. Hyde," and here the frame tightens. A will is a legal paper, and a legal paper is exactly what a lawyer would be forced to keep secret, so Stevenson gives the reader a reason to trust that Utterson is staying silent out of duty and not out of cowardice. The will leaves everything to Hyde, and it names the case in which he inherits: Jekyll's "disappearance or unexplained absence." The words "disappearance" and "absence" are important because they hint that Jekyll may be in danger, and they make Utterson act. This is why he starts watching the door and promises, in the book's phrase, "I shall be Mr. Seek." The will does not explain anything, but it gives the lawyer, and us, a reason to keep looking. It also fits the frame: the story is told from outside through Utterson's eyes, so everything that happens inside the laboratory reaches us as rumor. Because the reader knows only what Utterson knows, the clues feel heavy, like a handwriting that nearly matches and a murder that cannot be explained.

The third part is the ending, where the frame finally opens. The pace changes too. The book had moved in short chapters of watching and waiting, and now it slows into long, unbroken pages in a single voice, as if a locked room had finally been opened. In "The Last Night," Utterson goes home "to read the two narratives in which this mystery was now to be explained." The narrator announces that the explanation is waiting, and then Stevenson gives us two documents in a row, first Dr. Lanyon's account and then Jekyll's own statement. The shift from Utterson's polite, careful voice to a man writing in his own words changes the book. The order of the two documents is deliberate. Lanyon's narrative comes first, and it lets a respectable doctor, a man the reader trusts, report what he saw with his own eyes: a stranger drinks a mixture and becomes Jekyll. Only then does Jekyll explain how and why. The first document is a witness's report and the second is a confession, so Stevenson gives us proof before motive, and the explanation arrives in the voice of the man who has the most to hide. In the full statement, Jekyll writes that "man is not truly one, but truly two." By the time the reader hears this, the clues have all been collected, and the idea of a divided self fits them as a key fits a lock. If Stevenson had revealed it in chapter two, the sentence would have been an announcement. Placed here, after so many hints, it works like a discovery that the reader makes alongside the lawyer.

Some readers may feel that the delay is a trick, since many people guess that Jekyll and Hyde are one person long before the end. That may be true, but the delay is not just about surprise. It makes us live

> **with Utterson's loyalty and fear for most of the book, and the confession at the end hurts because we have spent so long hoping it will not be true.**
>
> **The frame keeps the reader outside the door, and the two documents bring the reader inside. Stevenson's structure carries the book's theme as much as its plot: a person can look calm on the outside while something else waits behind the door.**

Criterion	Score	Why
Thesis and focus	4	The thesis answers the prompt about structure (the frame keeps the reader outside with Utterson so the final confession lands harder) and the essay stays on the book's design instead of its plot.
Evidence and analysis	4	Quotations come from the first chapter, the will and the final documents, and each is explained in terms of its effect on the reader, such as Enfield's 'scarce know why' read as a promise that no witness can explain Hyde. The essay also answers the objection that readers guess the secret early.
Organization	4	The three parts are taken in the book's own order, with a clear opening claim, a topic sentence for each part, and a close that links structure to the theme without simply repeating the thesis.
Style and mechanics	4	The writing is clear, uses the present tense, and its door-and-lock comparison carries through the essay. Quotations are short, punctuated correctly and cited by chapter title in the sentence.

What lowers the score: The most common drop is telling what happens in each chapter (the trampled child, the murder, the transformation) instead of explaining how the placement of those events shapes the reader, which holds the essay to a 2 in Evidence and analysis. A thesis that says 'the frame and the reveal are important' names the topics without a claim. Quoting without saying how a passage's position in the book matters (for example, why it appears in the first chapter or in the last) leaves the essay at a 3. Giving the secret away in the first paragraph and then writing as if the reader did not know it is a frequent confusion, as is citing page numbers that the writer's edition does not have instead of the chapter title.

Prompt 7: A Local Question

Score 4 (Strong): "Give Fernhill Its Saturdays Back" (Lena, 807 words, 16 of 16)

Every Saturday morning for years, the front steps of the Fernhill Public Library were crowded with strollers, backpacks and kids waiting for the doors to open. Then, two years ago, the town council cut the budget and the library closed on Saturdays. The doors have been locked ever since. The council will vote in March on next year's budget, and I believe it should restore Saturday hours at the library by paying for two part-time staff members, a cost of about $7,800 a year. Saturday hours are worth the money for three reasons: they serve the families who cannot come on weekdays, they give homes without internet a place to get online, and they cost far less than they return.

The first reason is that Saturday is the only day many families can use the library at all. Weekday hours run from ten in the morning to five-thirty, and the elementary school lets out at 3:05. Parents who work in the next county do not get home until after the library closes, and many students have practice or a bus ride that takes up the late afternoon. When the library was open on Saturdays, the sign-in sheet at the children's story hour averaged thirty-eight children a week, according to the head librarian's report to the council two years ago. That number comes from the same Saturday hour that was cut. It matters because story hour is where many children get their first library card and learn that a library is for them. Take a family on Ash Street: a mother who works until six at a plant in the next county, a ten-year-old with a book report, and a library that closes before she gets home. On Saturday that family could go together, and on every other day they cannot. When families lose the one day that fits their schedule, the children who lose the most are the ones who had the fewest options to begin with.

The second reason is that the library is the only free place in town to get online. The school district's family survey last spring found that fourteen households in the Ash Street apartments have no internet at home. A student who needs to submit an essay by Sunday night cannot do it from a closed building. Adults filling out job applications and renewing licenses face the same wall. Nothing replaces these services over the weekend, because the nearest other public computers are in the next town, nine miles away. A library that is closed when people are free is not giving them access in any way that counts, because access that exists only on weekdays is not access for many of the people who need it.

The third reason is that Saturday hours are a small cost with a large payoff. Two part-time staff for six hours each Saturday come to about $7,800 a year, which is less than one-third of one percent of the town's yearly budget. In return, the town gets a building that was already paid for and heated being used six more hours a week. A study of the library's own checkout records before the cut showed that Saturday was its second-busiest day. Spending a small amount to reopen a service people already used is a better bargain than building a new one. This is also the reason the claim is realistic: I am not asking for new money for a new program, only to return what the town used to have.

The council's strongest argument against reopening is that the budget is tight, and every dollar spent on the library is a dollar taken from roads, the fire department or snow removal. Supporters of that view are right that the town cannot afford everything. Fernhill's budget did shrink, and the council has to protect services that keep people safe. But $7,800 is a small share of the budget, and the council has already shown it can find money when it chooses to. It was able to repaint the town hall last summer. A choice to repaint a building but leave a library locked on Saturdays says something about priorities. If the council needs a source, it could take the amount from the town hall maintenance line for one year and ask the Friends of the Library to help with the rest, since they have offered to raise funds before.

> Reopening on Saturdays will not fix every problem in Fernhill, and I am not claiming that it will. But it will give back one day to the families, students and job seekers who depend on the building. Please come to the council meeting on the second Tuesday in March and speak for the Saturday hours, or sign the petition at the front desk of the library. The doors were open for years. They can be again.

Criterion	Score	Why
Thesis and focus	4	The claim is precise and arguable (restore Saturday hours by funding two part-time staff, about $7,800 a year), it appears at the end of the introduction, and each of the three reasons is tied to it.
Evidence and analysis	4	Each reason has evidence and an explanation of why it proves the point: the story-hour sign-in sheet, the school survey about homes without internet and the cost compared with the budget. The opposing view is stated as its supporters would put it and answered with a concession and a concrete alternative.
Organization	4	A scene opens the essay, the claim ends the introduction, and the reasons build toward the cost argument. The counterargument comes after the reasons, and the conclusion ends with a specific call to action (the March meeting and the petition).
Style and mechanics	4	The tone is direct and respectful, the sentences vary, and the transitions ('The first reason', 'But $7,800') show the reasoning. No fallacy is used, and the writer admits what the claim does not do.

Score 3 (Competent): "Saturday Hours for the Library" (Marcus, 416 words, 12 of 16)

> The Fernhill Public Library used to be open on Saturdays, but the town council closed it on Saturdays two years ago to save money. I think the council should open the library again on Saturdays. There are three reasons: it helps families, it helps people who need the internet, and it is not very expensive.
>
> First, the library helps families who are busy during the week. Many parents work late and the library closes at five-thirty on weekdays. My neighbor has two kids who used to go every Saturday, and she told me they now have to wait for a ride to the next town, which is a long trip for a book. Kids can't go to the library after school because they have sports and other activities. On Saturday there was a story hour for little kids that a lot of children came to. Without Saturday hours, those families can't go at all. This shows that Saturday is an important day for a library.
>
> Second, people who don't have internet at home need the library. Some families in town don't have internet, and kids need it to do homework. If the library is closed on Saturday, they can't use the computers. Adults also use the library computers to look for jobs. The library is the only place in town where people can use free computers, so closing it on Saturday means they have no way to get online.
>
> Third, opening on Saturdays would not cost too much. The library already has the books and the building, so the town would not need to buy anything new, and the only new cost is for the workers who run the desk on Saturday morning. It would only need two part-time workers, which costs about $7,800 a year. That is a small part of the town budget.
>
> Some people say the town doesn't have the money and it should spend on roads and the fire department first. They have a point because those things are important. But the library only needs a small amount of money, and the town could find it. Maybe the council could take some of the money from other places in the budget, or ask the Friends of the Library for help.

> In conclusion, the Fernhill library should open on Saturdays again. It helps families, it helps people get online, and it doesn't cost very much. Please come to the council meeting in March and tell the council to open the library on Saturdays.

Criterion	Score	Why
Thesis and focus	3	The claim is clear and the three reasons are listed in the first paragraph, and most of the essay serves it. 'Open the library again on Saturdays' is a position, but it does not say how the town should pay for it.
Evidence and analysis	3	Each reason has relevant support, such as the story hour and the $7,800 cost, but the numbers are not sourced and some reasons ('some families in town don't have internet') are general. The counterargument is stated briefly and answered with 'maybe the council could take some of the money', which does not give a specific alternative.
Organization	3	The essay has a clear opening, three reasons and a call to action. Transitions are mechanical ('First', 'Second', 'Third') and the conclusion begins with 'In conclusion' and mostly repeats the introduction.
Style and mechanics	3	The sentences are clear and the tone is appropriate. Several are short and alike, there are stock phrases ('a lot of children'), and a few places use 'it helps' repeatedly, but no error blocks meaning.

Score 2 (Developing): "The Library Should Be Open" (Sofia, 203 words, 8 of 16)

> The library in my town is closed on Saturdays and that is really dumb. Everybody knows that libraries are important and the town council doesn't care about kids. They closed it to save money but they waste money on other things all the time.
>
> If the library stays closed on Saturday then pretty soon kids will stop reading and then they will not do good in school and then they will not get jobs. That is why the council has to open it. Also my friend Ava used to go every Saturday and she says its the best part of her week so it should be open.
>
> Some people say that there is not enough money. But those people just dont like libraries. Every town in America has a library thats open on Saturday so Fernhill should too. If we do not open it then our town is the worst town.
>
> The library is a place where you can read books and use computers and its a quiet place. My mom says that when she was a kid the library was open all the time. We should go back to that. The council should open the library on Saturdays. I hope they do.

Criterion	Score	Why
Thesis and focus	2	The position is present (‘the library should be open’), but it is mixed with insults to the council and the claim is never made precise, with no plan or reason it could be tested against.
Evidence and analysis	2	The only evidence is a friend’s opinion and a mother’s memory, and no reason is explained. The opposing view is dismissed (‘those people just dont like libraries’) instead of being stated fairly, and the essay leans on fallacies the unit warns about: a slippery slope (kids stop reading, then no jobs), a hasty generalization (‘every town in America has a library thats open on Saturday’) and an attack on people instead of their argument.
Organization	2	The paragraphs run together several ideas, no reasons are separated and the ending simply says ‘I hope they do’. There is no call to action.
Style and mechanics	2	The tone slips into name-calling (‘really dumb’, ‘the worst town’), sentences are chained with ‘and then’, and apostrophes are missing in ‘its’, ‘dont’ and ‘thats’. The errors slow the reader but do not block meaning.

Score 1 (Beginning): “Library” (Jake, 43 words, 5 of 16)

> **I think the library should be open on saturdays. Its good because you can get books. And the council is wrong. Kids like the library and they want it open. Also its fun and my friend goes there. The town should open it.**

Criterion	Score	Why
Thesis and focus	1	The essay states an opinion but not a claim a reader can weigh, and it does not say what the council should do, why or how.
Evidence and analysis	1	There is no evidence, no reasons that could be tested and no opposing view; ‘the council is wrong’ is not explained.
Organization	1	The essay is a single paragraph of loosely connected sentences with no opening, no order and no conclusion or call to action.
Style and mechanics	2	There are errors (‘saturdays’ without a capital, ‘Its’ for ‘It’s’, repeated ‘and’ openings), but the meaning is clear, so this criterion earns a 2 and the total is 5.

Prompt 8: A Short Research Essay

Score 4 (Strong): "From a Lion to a Feud: How Shakespeare Changed Pyramus and Thisbe" (Rosa, 1,068 words, 16 of 16)

> Shakespeare did not invent the story of two young lovers kept apart by their families. Long before Romeo and Juliet, the Roman poet Ovid told it in the tale of Pyramus and Thisbe, and Shakespeare's play shares so many of its details that readers have seen the connection for centuries. My research question is how Shakespeare changed Ovid's story, and what those changes do to its meaning. I argue that Shakespeare made two major changes. He replaced an accident with a human cause, and he turned a quick mercy at the end into a peace that comes too late. Together these changes make the play a story about what hatred does to people, where the myth is mostly a story about bad luck.
>
> I used five sources. The primary texts are Shakespeare's play and Ovid's tale in the 1717 translation by Laurence Eusden, a poem I read in full. For background I used Odell Education's ninth-grade unit on the play, whose author is an educational organization and whose lesson asks students to compare the two works, and two Wikipedia articles, on Romeo and Juliet and on A Midsummer Night's Dream. Wikipedia has no single author, so I used those articles only for facts I could check against the texts themselves, such as the plot of each work, and I did not rely on them for any interpretation. I dropped the quotations in my notes that I could not trace to a primary text.
>
> First, the two works share a skeleton. Odell's lesson treats Ovid's tale as one of the sources Shakespeare drew on (Odell Education), and the Wikipedia article on the play lists the same parallels: the parents despise each other, and one lover wrongly believes the other is dead ("Romeo and Juliet"). That article also says that the immediate source of the plot was a long poem by Arthur Brooke in 1562, so Shakespeare took Ovid's pattern through an Italian story as well. In both works a wall stands between the lovers. In Ovid, a thin crack in the wall between the two houses lets them whisper, and they call it a "Malicious Wall, thus Lovers to divide!" (Ovid). In Shakespeare, the wall is the orchard's, and Juliet warns Romeo that "The orchard walls are high and hard to climb" (Shakespeare 2.2). In both works the barrier is physical first and then symbolic.
>
> The first big change is the cause of the lovers' trouble. In Ovid the families are neighbors whose parents simply object to the match: "What Parents could not hinder, they forbad" (Ovid). The parents are strict, but the poem does not describe a feud. In Shakespeare, the Prologue announces an "ancient grudge" between two households (Shakespeare, Prologue), and Juliet calls Romeo her "only love sprung from my only hate!" (1.5). She also asks him to "Deny thy father and refuse thy name" (2.2). That is a request to give up his family, a demand that no one makes in the Roman tale. Odell's lesson asks students to judge whether Shakespeare's changes strengthen or weaken the theme of the myth (Odell Education), and I think this one does. Making the opposition a feud turns a private love story into a public problem.
>
> The second change is how the lovers die. In Ovid, a lioness covered in blood comes out of the dark, Thisbe runs, and she drops her veil, which the lioness tears. When Pyramus finds the bloody veil, he blames himself with the words "Tis I am guilty, I have thee betray'd" (Ovid) and kills himself. Nothing human causes the tragedy; it is a wild animal and a lost cloth. In Shakespeare, the equivalent is not a lion but a failed message. The Friar's letter to Romeo is held up when Friar John is shut into a house by officials who fear a sickness, and the Friar can only say "Unhappy fortune!" (5.2). That delay looks like chance, like the lion. But it comes at the end of a long chain of human choices: the secret marriage, Romeo's fight with Tybalt and his banishment. Shakespeare keeps a touch of accident, but surrounds it with causes that people made. The tragedy is no longer a misunderstanding on one dark night. It is the result of a society that left its children no safe way to love.

The third change is the ending. In Ovid, Thisbe prays aloud, “Oh! see our Ashes in one Urn confin’d,” and the poem says that gods and parents hear her and “mix their Ashes in one golden Urn” (Ovid). The parents relent at once, and the mulberry fruit changes color as a lasting sign. In Shakespeare, the families also make peace, but only after the deaths. Capulet says, “O brother Montague, give me thy hand” (5.3), and Montague promises, “For I will raise her statue in pure gold” (5.3). The gold in both works is a small echo of the myth. In the play, though, the gold is a payment made when it is too late. Capulet calls the lovers “Poor sacrifices of our enmity” (5.3). The word “sacrifices” shows that the fathers understand what the feud cost. The Prologue states the price in advance, saying that the lovers’ deaths will “bury their parents’ strife” (Shakespeare, Prologue). Ovid’s parents are moved by a prayer, and Shakespeare’s are moved by a funeral. Where Ovid’s ending is a kind of consolation, Shakespeare’s is an accusation.

Shakespeare also used the tale in another play. In A Midsummer Night’s Dream, a group of workmen perform a clumsy version of Pyramus and Thisbe, and the audience on stage laughs at it, according to the Wikipedia article (“A Midsummer Night’s Dream”). I take this to show that Shakespeare saw how close the story is to comedy. A chance accident that kills two lovers can look foolish, which may be why he changed it so much in Romeo and Juliet. By making the cause a feud and the ending a hard reconciliation, he made the story harder to laugh at.

These changes answer my research question. Shakespeare kept Ovid’s lovers, his barrier and his double death, but he moved the cause from a lion to a feud and the ending from a wish granted to a lesson learned too late. The result is a tragedy that blames people rather than luck, and that is what makes the play feel so different from the myth it came from.

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Criterion	Score	Why
Thesis and focus	4	The research question is stated in the introduction and the thesis answers it with an arguable claim (Shakespeare replaced an accident with a human cause and turned a quick mercy into a late peace). Each section develops one change.
Evidence and analysis	4	Five sources are used and the writer judges them in the second paragraph: the primary texts carry the argument, and Wikipedia is used for plot facts only and checked against the texts. Quotations from the play and Ovid's tale are short, introduced, cited and explained, and the writer's own thinking outweighs the quotations.
Organization	4	The essay runs from the shared skeleton to the three changes (cause, deaths, ending), then to the comic version in A Midsummer Night's Dream, and returns to the question in the conclusion. Transitions ('The first big change', 'The second change', 'The third change') show the order.
Style and mechanics	4	In-text citations follow MLA (act and scene for the play, author or title for the others), and every citation matches an entry in the works cited list, which is alphabetized by the first word of each entry. Facts from secondary sources are in the writer's own words, with no quotation from them.

What lowers the score: The most common drop is a thesis that only compares ('the two stories are alike and different') without a claim about what Shakespeare's changes do, which holds the essay at a 2 in Thesis and focus. A works cited list that does not match the in-text citations, or sources that go unchecked for author, publisher and date, lowers Style and mechanics and Evidence and analysis. Fewer than four sources, or a source quoted at length with little commentary, keeps the essay at a 3. Copying a secondary writer's sentences, even with a citation, instead of paraphrasing, is the most serious problem and moves the essay toward a 1 on both of those criteria.

Model answers: English 10

These essays were written for this pack to show what each score looks like. They are examples to discuss with the student, not texts to copy. Each is scored criterion by criterion with the matching rubric, and every quotation is from a public-domain text the course reads. Prompts 2, 4 and 7 have a model at each score level; the others have a score-4 model and a note on what lowers the score.

Prompt 1: Whose Law Should Rule?

Score 4 (Strong): "A Law Is Not Just Whatever the King Says" (Maya, 837 words, 16 of 16)

When Creon forbids anyone to bury Polyneices, two kinds of law collide in Sophocles' Antigone: the edict of a king and the old customs that every Theban knows. Many readers say Creon's side deserves respect, because a city cannot run if each person picks which orders to obey. I understand that worry, but I disagree. In Francis Storr's translation, Antigone's law should rule, because Creon's edict is only his own will wearing the name of law, while the duty Antigone obeys is shared, old and tested by the play itself.

First, Creon's edict is personal, not public. He announces that no one may "give him burial or make mourn for him," and he explains it by his own pride: "never by my will / Shall miscreants take precedence of true men." The words that matter are "by my will." When the chorus answers, its elders do not call the edict wise. They say, "Thy word is law; thou canst dispose of us / The living, as thou will'st, as of the dead." That sentence describes a city where law has shrunk to one man's word. Later, Creon proves it himself when Haemon asks him to listen to the people. Creon replies with a question, "Am I to rule for others, or myself?" A good law answers to the whole city, and Creon says out loud that he answers to himself. A rule that serves one man's pride is a command, and calling it a law does not change that.

Second, Antigone's law is not just her private feeling. When Creon asks if she knew about the edict, she says that "these laws were not ordained of Zeus," and that she did not think a mortal man "Could'st by a breath annul and override / The immutable unwritten laws of Heaven." She adds that those customs "die not; and none knoweth whence they sprang." Her point is about age and reach: the duty to bury a brother belongs to everyone, so it is not hers alone. Haemon confirms this when he reports what he hears in the streets. Creon asks if Antigone is a lawbreaker, and Haemon answers, "The Theban commons with one voice say, No." The city that Creon claims to protect has already judged for her. Haemon also explains why nobody says so to the king: "The commons stand in terror of thy frown." The silence in Thebes is fear, not agreement, so it cannot count as support for the edict. Her law has more public support than his.

Third, the play treats Creon's law as the one that fails. Teiresias warns him, "thou usurp'st a power not thine," and says the gods will not accept the offerings of a city that leaves a body unburied. Even then Creon is slow to listen, but when the chorus urges him to give way, he breaks. He says, "To yield is grievous, but the obstinate soul / That fights with Fate, is smitten grievously." Then he goes to bury the dead and free Antigone, and he admits, "Almost I am persuaded it is best / To keep through life the law ordained of old." The word "Almost" shows how hard this is for him. Still, the ruler who began by saying his word was law ends by agreeing with the old law. He is too late to save Antigone, but the play's verdict is clear.

The strongest counterclaim is Creon's own: a city needs obedience. He tells Haemon, "What evils are not wrought by Anarchy!" and he insists that whoever the State appoints must be obeyed. For a while the elders agree with him, since they call his speech to Haemon "reasonable and wise." I agree that anarchy is dangerous, and I agree that Antigone breaks the law on purpose. The chorus even calls her "A stubborn daughter of a stubborn sire." But Creon's argument works only for laws that protect order, and burying one's brother threatens no one. The disorder in the play comes from the edict, not from the burial. His own son leaves him, his councilors turn nervous, and his city is warned by a prophet. Obedience to a bad order does not preserve a city, and in Thebes it comes close to destroying one.

> **This does not make Antigone a perfect model. She is proud, and she is harsh to Ismene, who is afraid. Still, the question is whose law should rule, and not who is easier to like. A law that depends on one man's mood falls apart when he changes his mind, while the duty Antigone obeys was there before Creon and is still standing at the end. The edict lasts only as long as Creon's pride lasts, and the old duty outlasts him. That difference is what I mean by a law that deserves to rule. Her cry, "Alas, my piety is impious deemed," could be the play's question to every city. The play's answer is that when a ruler's word and the oldest duties disagree, the oldest duties should win.**

Criterion	Score	Why
Thesis and focus	4	The thesis takes a side that a reader could dispute (Antigone's law should rule) and gives three reasons: the edict is personal, her law is shared, and the play punishes Creon. Each body paragraph opens with one of those reasons, and the counterclaim section is tied back to the same claim.
Evidence and analysis	4	Quotations come from Creon, the chorus, Haemon, Teiresias and Antigone, and each is explained, for example the stress on 'by my will' and on the single word 'Almost.' The strongest counterclaim (anarchy) is quoted from Creon and answered fairly, with a concession that Antigone breaks the law on purpose.
Organization	4	The opening states the claim, the three reasons follow a logical order from edict to custom to outcome, and the counterclaim comes after the evidence. The last paragraph adds a limit (Antigone is not perfect) and a return to the question, rather than repeating the introduction.
Style and mechanics	4	Sentences are varied and direct, quotations are introduced with the speaker named, verse breaks are marked with slashes, and Storr's name is given at the first use of his translation. There are no errors that slow the reader.

What lowers the score: The most common drop is a thesis that only says both sides have a point, which leaves nothing for the essay to prove and holds Thesis and focus at a 2. Retelling the plot from Antigone's arrest to the deaths, instead of arguing from three chosen moments, keeps Evidence and analysis at a 2. Quoting Creon without answering him, or treating the counterclaim as silly, leaves the essay at a 3 on Evidence and analysis. Mixing up speakers, or quoting a modern translation the essay did not name, costs points in Style and mechanics.

Prompt 2: Two Stories, One Theme

Score 4 (Strong): "Two Prices for the Wrong Prize" (Priya, 939 words, 16 of 16)

> In Guy de Maupassant's "The Necklace" and Anton Chekhov's "The Bet," a person pays years of life for a prize that proves to be worth far less than it looked. Mathilde Loisel spends ten years paying for a diamond necklace that was only paste, and the young lawyer in Chekhov's story gives up fifteen years of freedom for a fortune that he finally refuses. Both stories ask what someone is really buying when she chases an appearance of value. I will argue that their endings answer differently. Mathilde never learns what her years were spent on, because she is still proud of her sacrifice when the truth arrives, while the lawyer understands exactly what he has spent and uses that knowledge to turn the prize down. Maupassant shows a person ruined by other people's eyes, and Chekhov shows a person who learns to look away from them. I read the stories in A. M. C. McMaster's translation of Maupassant and in the translation of Chekhov by S. S. Koteliansky and J. M. Murry, and I compare them point by point: what each person wants, what the years do, and what the ending reveals.
>
> Both stories begin with a want that depends on other people. Maupassant says that Mathilde "would have liked so much to please, to be envied, to be charming, to be sought after." Every one of those verbs needs an audience, since nobody can be envied alone. At the ministry ball she gets exactly what she wanted: "All the men looked at her," and she dances "intoxicated by pleasure." The lawyer's want is harder to see, because the story gives it to us through the banker. Fifteen years after the bet, the banker calls it "the caprice of a well-fed man" on his own side and "pure greed of gold" on the lawyer's. That is only the banker's opinion, and the story lets the lawyer answer it later. Still, both wants begin as borrowed values. Mathilde needs other people to find her beautiful, and the lawyer is staking his life on money, which is worth something only because everyone agrees that it is. In each case the thing wanted has no value of its own, and that is why its loss, or its refusal, can reshape a life so completely.
>
> The years then do opposite work on the two characters. Mathilde's ten years of debt change her body but not her thinking. She becomes "strong and hard and rough," scrubbing floors and bargaining over every coin. Yet sometimes she "sat down near the window and she thought of that gay evening of long ago." What she concludes is a sigh about luck: "How small a thing is needed to make or ruin us!" That sentence blames a small accident. It never admits that the real turning point was the lie she told Madame Forestier, when she pretended to be mending the clasp instead of confessing the loss. The lawyer's fifteen years run the other way. His early years are restless, but by the sixth year he is studying "languages, philosophy, and history," and he writes a letter in six languages that says, "The geniuses of all ages and countries speak in different languages; but in them all burns the same flame." Chekhov adds that he read "as though he were swimming in the sea among the broken pieces of wreckage," which shows how hungrily he searched. Both characters lose their youth, but the lawyer's years give him something new to think about, while Mathilde's years only repay the old want.
>
> The endings show the difference most clearly. Madame Forestier's last line, "my necklace was paste," turns Mathilde's whole decade into a waste. The reader feels this more because of the sentence just before it, which says that Mathilde "smiled with a joy that was at once proud and ingenuous." She is proud of a payment that was never needed, so she has not found out what her years bought. Maupassant stops at the moment of discovery, and we never see her answer. In Chekhov, the reveal comes from the prisoner himself, in the note he leaves on the table: "I despise freedom, life, health, and all that your books call the blessings of the world." He then explains that he will leave "five minutes before the stipulated term, and thus shall violate the agreement," which means he gives up the prize on purpose. A story that began with a bet about whether a man could be locked up ends with a man who

locks nothing and takes nothing. The banker, who had come to the wing planning to smother him, feels "such contempt for himself as now" that no business loss ever matched it.

A reader could object that the lawyer's freedom is cold too. His note despises everything the books call a blessing, and it also boasts, "I know that I am more clever than you all." Pride has not left him; it has only changed its target. I agree that his conclusion is extreme, and Chekhov may not want us to share it. But my argument is not about whether the lawyer is wise. It is about whether he knows the price, and he does.

Both stories end with an empty prize: a necklace worth at most five hundred francs, and a fortune that is never paid. Where they part is in the person left holding it. Mathilde has lost ten years and still does not understand what she was buying. The lawyer has lost fifteen, and he can name the cost. Maupassant leaves us with her ignorance, and Chekhov leaves us with a choice.

Criterion	Score	Why
Thesis and focus	4	The basis of comparison (a years-long payment for a false prize) is stated in the first paragraph, and the thesis makes a disputable claim about the difference: Mathilde never learns the cost, the lawyer does. The three-point plan is announced and each paragraph keeps to it.
Evidence and analysis	4	Each point has a quotation from both stories, and each is explained, for example the observation that every verb in Mathilde's wish needs an audience and that 'How small a thing' blames luck instead of her lie. The objection about the lawyer's pride is stated with a quotation and answered fairly.
Organization	4	Point-by-point order (wants, years, endings) lets the reader compare the stories side by side, and every paragraph moves between them with a clear transition ('opposite work,' 'the endings show'). The conclusion states what the comparison found instead of repeating the introduction.
Style and mechanics	4	Both translators are named at the start, the literary present is held, and the sentences vary in length without errors. The voice is plain and confident, and quotations are worked into the student's own sentences.

Score 3 (Competent): "Wanting Too Much in Two Stories" (Marcus, 616 words, 12 of 16)

Money and wanting more than you have drive both "The Necklace" by Guy de Maupassant and "The Bet" by Anton Chekhov. In both stories a character wants something that is hard to get, and the cost is much bigger than anyone expects. The stories end differently, though, because Mathilde loses her years for nothing while the lawyer decides on his own to give up the prize. This essay compares the characters' wants, the price they pay and the endings. I used A. M. C. McMaster's translation for Maupassant and the translation by Koteliansky and Murry for Chekhov.

First, look at what each character wants. Mathilde is unhappy with her small life. She "had no gowns, no jewels, nothing," and she dreams of being envied. The invitation to the ministry ball makes her cry because she has nothing to wear, and then she borrows a diamond necklace from her friend so that she can look rich. The lawyer in "The Bet" wants two million, which the banker promises him if he can stay in a room for fifteen years. The banker says later that the lawyer was moved by "pure greed of gold." Both characters want something that would change their lives, so the wants are alike. The difference is who decides. Mathilde wants other people to look at her, and she cannot control that, while the lawyer takes a bet that he can control by staying put. This matters later, because it shows why Mathilde is helpless when the necklace disappears.

Next, the price they pay. After Mathilde loses the necklace, she and her husband borrow a great deal of money to buy a new one. They "dismissed their servant" and moved to a smaller place, and Mathilde does the housework herself. She becomes "strong and hard and rough." The price is her comfort and her looks for ten years. The lawyer's price is fifteen years in the garden wing with no visitors. In the first year he "suffered terribly from loneliness and boredom." Later he reads a lot, and the banker has to buy "about six hundred volumes" in four years. So both pay with time, but the lawyer's time changes his mind, while Mathilde's time only makes her older. Chekhov even writes that the lawyer read "as though he were swimming in the sea among the broken pieces of wreckage." This shows that he is searching for something to hold on to. Maupassant gives Mathilde no such search, only work and debts.

Finally, the endings. In "The Necklace" the twist is that the necklace was fake. Madame Forestier says, "Why, my necklace was paste! It was worth at most only five hundred francs!" This is ironic because Mathilde has worked for ten years to pay for something that was almost worthless. The reader feels sorry for her, and also notices that she could have told the truth at the start. In "The Bet" the twist is that the lawyer leaves early. He writes that he will come out "five minutes before the stipulated term," so that he loses the bet on purpose. The banker, who was afraid of going broke, ends up feeling ashamed of himself instead. Also, the lawyer says he despises everything in the world, which is a strange thing to say after fifteen years of reading.

In conclusion, both stories show that wanting money or status can cost people a lot. However, Mathilde's mistake was an accident that she did not understand, and the lawyer's loss was a choice that he did understand. That is the main difference between the two stories. Readers can learn from both of them to think before they chase something that other people say is valuable.

Criterion	Score	Why
Thesis and focus	3	The thesis names a likeness (both want too much) and a difference (accident versus choice), and it answers the prompt. It is stated more as a summary of the two plots than as a claim about what Maupassant and Chekhov think, so it stays a 3.
Evidence and analysis	3	Each point has a relevant, accurate quotation from both stories. Several quotations are left to speak for themselves ('strong and hard and rough,' 'five minutes before the stipulated term') with little explanation of what they show.
Organization	3	The point-by-point plan is clear (wants, price, endings) and the paragraphs are unified. Transitions are mechanical ('First,' 'Next,' 'Finally,' 'In conclusion'), and the last paragraph restates the thesis.
Style and mechanics	3	Sentences are clear and the tone is suitable, and both translators are named. There are minor slips: the remark that the lawyer 'despises everything in the world' is dropped in without explanation, and the final sentence is a general lesson that does not come from the evidence.

Score 2 (Developing): "The Necklace and The Bet" (Dani, 406 words, 8 of 16)

Both of these stories are about people who make a big mistake and then there is a twist at the end. They are by Maupassant and Chekhov, and they are good examples of short stories with irony.

In "The Necklace" there is a woman named Mathilde who wants to be rich. Her husband gets an invitation to a ball but she has nothing to wear so she is upset. He gives her four hundred francs for a dress and then she borrows a necklace from her friend Madame Forestier. At the ball everybody likes her. But when she gets home she realizes she lost the necklace. They go looking for it, and they cant find it so they buy another one that costs thirty-six thousand francs. They have to borrow money and it

takes them ten years to pay it back. She works very hard and she looks old. Then one day she sees Madame Forestier and tells her the truth. Madame Forestier says "Why, my necklace was paste!" So it was all for nothing.

In "The Bet" there is a banker who has a party and he bets a lawyer two million that he cant stay in a room for five years. The lawyer says he will stay fifteen years. The lawyer reads a lot of books and he gets smart. When the fifteen years are almost over the banker is poor and he wants to kill the lawyer so he doesnt have to pay. He goes to the room and finds a letter. The letter says that the lawyer "despises freedom" and he will leave early. So the banker doesnt have to pay and he cries. Chekhov wrote this story in a way that makes you feel sorry for the banker at the end, even though he was going to do something bad.

These two stories are alike because they are both about money and they both have a twist. In "The Necklace" the twist is the necklace is fake and in "The Bet" the twist is the lawyer leaves early. They are different because Mathilde is poor and the banker is rich. Also the necklace story is in Paris and the bet story is in Russia, so they have different settings. Both stories show that people can make mistakes and that things dont always turn out how you think. I liked both of them a lot and I think they are good stories.

Criterion	Score	Why
Thesis and focus	2	The first sentence names a topic (a mistake and a twist) but makes no claim a reader could dispute. The essay never says what the stories show about their characters, so the closing sentence ('people can make mistakes') is the only point.
Evidence and analysis	2	Most of the essay retells the plots, and the two quotations are given with no explanation. The second one is also wrong: the note says 'I despise freedom,' and the student changed the words to 'despises freedom' inside the quotation marks. The retelling also leaves out why the banker is relieved (the lawyer breaks the contract).
Organization	2	The essay uses block order, one story and then the other, so the comparison does not begin until the last paragraph. The opening is generic and the ending is an opinion ('I liked both of them').
Style and mechanics	2	Missing apostrophes (cant, doesnt, dont), run-on sentences joined with 'and' and 'so,' and no translators named. The tense is mostly present but slips ('realizes she lost'). The meaning is still clear, so the essay is a 2 and not a 1.

Score 1 (Beginning): "Two Stories" (Kyle, 149 words, 5 of 16)

The necklace and the bet are both about money. In the necklace a lady looses the necklace and have to pay it back for ten years. In the bet a man stays in a room fifteen years because of money. They are both good stories I liked them. The lady was sad and so was the man. At the end the necklace was fake and the man left. I think they both learned a lesson. Money is not everything so dont be greedy. The necklace story was more sad because she worked so hard and then it was not even real. The bet story was more weird because why would a man want to stay in a room that long. Maybe he was crazy. I would not do that for any amount of money. The authors are Maupassant and Chekhov and they wrote the stories a long time ago.

Criterion	Score	Why
Thesis and focus	1	There is no thesis. The first sentence (both are about money) is a fact, and the essay never compares anything beyond it.
Evidence and analysis	1	There are no quotations and almost no detail from the stories. ‘The man was sad’ is not supported, and the claim that both ‘learned a lesson’ is not explained.
Organization	2	The essay has a beginning, a middle and an end in about eight sentences, but it is one paragraph, with no plan and no transitions, so the score is a low 2 for order.
Style and mechanics	1	Errors such as ‘looses,’ ‘have to pay it back,’ ‘dont’ and the run-on ‘good stories I liked them’ slow the reader. The titles are not marked and the translators are not named, so the sources are not cited.

Prompt 3: Two Translators, One Poem

Score 4 (Strong): "A Cry and a Letter" (Elena, 675 words, 16 of 16)

A translated poem is a new poem in a second language, and two translators can make two different poems from the same words. The Tang poet Li Bai wrote a poem in the voice of a merchant's wife who waits for her husband to come home. Ezra Pound printed his version in Cathay in 1915, calling the poet Rihaku and the poem "The River-Merchant's Wife: a Letter." Arthur Waley published his version in 1919, in a paper on the poet called The Poet Li Po, under the title "Ch'ang-kan." I cannot read Chinese, so I can only argue from the two English poems. My claim is that Pound's choices stress the wife's feelings by letting them break the lines, so his poem sounds like a cry, while Waley's choices stress a steady telling, so his poem sounds like a letter written to be understood.

The first difference is voice, and it begins with how each translator names the marriage. Pound writes, "At fourteen I married My Lord you." The odd, formal phrase "My Lord you" makes the girl sound polite and a little stiff, as if she were still learning how to speak to her husband. Waley writes, "At fourteen I became your wife." That line is plain and personal, and it makes the marriage a change in who she is. The same contrast appears in her first childhood memory. Pound has the children living "Two small people, without dislike or suspicion," while Waley has "Two children, without hate or suspicion." Pound's "small people" keeps the picture a little distant and delicate. Waley's "children" is direct.

The second difference is form, and it is the clearest evidence of what each translator emphasizes. Pound's lines are short and often stop where a thought stops. When the wife is a shy bride, she says, "Called to, a thousand times, I never looked back." The commas make her stop and start, as if she is counting. Waley's matching line is "Called to a thousand times, I did not turn." It runs straight through, and it reads as a fact about her habit. The difference grows near the end of her complaint. Pound writes, "They hurt me, / I grow older," and two short lines stand alone, with no explanation. Waley writes, "The sight of these wounds my heart with pain," a full sentence that names the feeling and the cause. Pound lets the reader feel the wound, and Waley tells the reader about it.

Repetition shows the same split. When the wife promises to love her husband forever, Pound has her say, "I desired my dust to be mingled with yours / Forever and forever, and forever." The third "forever" is a small breaking point, a voice going past what a sentence needs. Waley's version is "desired my ashes to be mingled with your dust," and it stops where the grammar does. The result is a promise that sounds calm and settled, not overflowing.

The ending makes the contrast last. Pound's wife says, "Please let me know beforehand," and then offers to come out "As far as Cho-fu-Sa." The last line is short, nearly a whisper, and it ends on a place name that only has meaning for her. Waley's wife says, "I will come to meet you as far as ever you please," and the poem's final line adds that she will go even to "the dangerous sands." Her promise becomes brave, because she names a danger. Pound leaves her longing open, and Waley closes it with a decision.

A fair reader could say that both translators show the wife's loneliness, and that is true. Both keep the moss, the monkeys and the yellow butterflies. My claim is about emphasis. Pound's broken lines and repeated words put the weight on feeling, so his poem moves like a cry. Waley's full sentences and added detail put the weight on telling, so his poem moves like a letter. The two poems are about the same woman, but each translator chose which part of her to let the reader hear.

Criterion	Score	Why
Thesis and focus	4	The thesis names both translators and says what each emphasizes (feeling through broken lines versus steady telling). The essay keeps to the English texts and says so, and each paragraph is a point about a translator's choices: voice, form, repetition, ending.
Evidence and analysis	4	Matching lines from Pound and Waley are quoted side by side for every point, and each pair is explained, for example the commas in 'Called to, a thousand times' and the third 'forever.' The fair-minded paragraph near the end admits what the poems share and keeps the claim about emphasis.
Organization	4	The paragraphs move from voice to form to repetition to the ending, so the contrast builds. The conclusion restates the claim in new terms (cry and letter) and adds the idea that each translator chose which part of the wife to let the reader hear.
Style and mechanics	4	Each translator and book year is named at the first use, quotations are introduced, and verse breaks are marked with slashes. The writing is clear, with varied sentences and very few errors.

What lowers the score: The most common drop is a comparison that lists differences ('Pound has dust, Waley has ashes') without saying what they emphasize, which holds the essay at a 2 on Thesis and focus. Quoting only one translation, or quoting both without setting matching lines side by side, leaves Evidence and analysis at a 3. Guessing about what the Chinese 'really' says, or crediting Li Bai for a word that is the translator's own choice, is the error the prompt warns against and lowers the score in two criteria. Forgetting to name the translators and the books costs points in Style and mechanics.

Prompt 4: How a Speech Persuades

Score 4 (Strong): "How Antony Turns an Honourable Word" (Jamal, 868 words, 16 of 16)

> In Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, Brutus has just killed Caesar and explained why to the people of Rome, and the crowd has cheered him: "Live, Brutus! live, live!" Mark Antony then has to speak at Caesar's funeral, and he is working under a rule. Brutus has allowed the speech "By our permission," and he has asked Antony to praise Caesar without blaming the killers. Antony's job is to turn a friendly crowd against the men who control the situation, and he cannot say so. I will argue that Antony persuades this audience by obeying Brutus's rule on the surface while breaking it underneath. He changes a word of praise into an accusation, gives the crowd evidence and lets it draw its own conclusion, and then moves it from thinking to feeling with the body and the will.
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> Antony begins by lowering the crowd's guard. His opening, "Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears; / I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him," promises that he is no threat, and it asks for attention as a favor. Then he starts the repetition that carries the speech: "Yet Brutus says he was ambitious; / And Brutus is an honourable man." The first time, this sounds like courtesy to the man who gave him permission. Each time it comes back, it follows a fact that makes the accusation look weaker, so the praise begins to sound like sarcasm. The effect is visible in the crowd. By the end, a citizen is using Antony's own word as an insult: "They were traitors. Honourable men!" Antony never has to call Brutus a traitor, because the audience supplies the word.
>
> The second move is evidence. Antony does not tell the crowd that Brutus is wrong; he asks questions about what they saw. "He hath brought many captives home to Rome, / Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill: / Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?" Then, about the day of the feast, "I thrice presented him a kingly crown, / Which he did thrice refuse. Was this ambition?" He adds a line that works on feeling and logic at once: "When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept; / Ambition should be made of sterner stuff." The listeners already believe that ambitious men are hard, so a man who weeps for the poor does not fit the picture. Because he leaves the answer open, the people have to say no, and a conclusion they reach themselves feels more like their own. A citizen finishes the argument for him: "He would not take the crown; / Therefore 'tis certain he was not ambitious." Antony also protects himself with the claim, "I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke," which sounds modest while he does exactly that.
>
> The third move is the appeal to feeling, and it is carefully timed. Antony first calls attention to the will without reading it, and when the crowd cries out for it he answers, "Have patience, gentle friends, I must not read it." By refusing, he makes the people demand it, and the will becomes something that they have won from him. He also presents himself as a simple person: "I am no orator, as Brutus is; / But, as you know me all, a plain blunt man." The line is ironic, since he is delivering a speech built with great skill, but it makes the audience trust him more than a polished speaker. Then he comes down to the body and makes them look: "If you have tears, prepare to shed them now." He points to the holes in Caesar's cloak, "See what a rent the envious Casca made," and the dagger holes become the evidence, so the dead man seems to speak. He even tells the crowd that a better speaker would "put a tongue / In every wound of Caesar," and in saying so he does exactly that. By the time he says "O, now you weep; and I perceive you feel / The dint of pity," the crowd has already crossed from judgment to grief.
>
> A fair reader could object that Antony wins by tricks, while Brutus's speech was an honest request to think. Brutus asked the people, "Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more," and he trusted reason. I agree that Antony's speech is manipulative, and the play shows what it costs, since the crowd turns into a mob that wants revenge. But Antony's method also depends on facts the audience

can check, such as the three refusals of the crown, and he keeps the last step open. At the end he says, "Stay, countrymen," a pause that keeps his own hands clean even as the crowd cries for blood.

So Antony persuades because he understands his audience's situation. The crowd trusts Brutus, so Antony cannot attack him, and he lets the word "honourable" do the attacking for him. The crowd values Caesar's deeds, so he lists them as questions, and the crowd wants to be moved, so he keeps the will and the wounds until the right moment. In a single scene he takes a crowd that cheered one man and sends it out to burn for another.

Criterion	Score	Why
Thesis and focus	4	The opening builds the situation first (Brutus's permission and rule) and then gives a disputable thesis about how Antony persuades: he obeys the rule on the surface and breaks it underneath. The three stages of the thesis (word, evidence, feeling) organize the body.
Evidence and analysis	4	Quotations come from across the speech and from the citizens' replies, and each explains the effect on this audience, for example how the repeated 'honourable' changes meaning and how a citizen finishes the argument about the crown. The objection that Antony manipulates is stated with Brutus's own line and answered.
Organization	4	Situation comes before devices, and the devices follow the order of the speech. The objection paragraph comes after the evidence, and the conclusion explains why each move fits the crowd, not just that it worked.
Style and mechanics	4	Quotations are introduced and verse breaks are marked with slashes. Sentences vary, the literary present is held, and the one-line description of irony ('a plain blunt man') is precise.

Score 3 (Competent): "Anthony Argues Like a Lawyer" (Nadia, 575 words, 12 of 16)

In 1873 Susan B. Anthony was charged with a crime for voting in a presidential election, and before her trial she gave a speech in the nearby counties asking, in effect, whether she was a criminal at all. She speaks to ordinary voters who may sit on a jury, and most of them are men who cannot be certain that a woman's vote is lawful. My claim is that Anthony persuades her audience mainly through logic, using the words of the Constitution to build a chain of reasons, and that she adds one strong emotional charge near the end to keep the audience's attention.

The first device is her opening. She tells the audience that she stands before them "under indictment," and then says she will prove that "I not only committed no crime." This is a promise to argue, and it sets a calm tone. She does not begin by complaining, so the listeners are invited to judge.

Her main method is the chain of reasons. She quotes the Constitution's preamble and says that "It was we, the people, not we, the white male citizens, nor yet we, the male citizens, but we, the whole people, who formed this Union." The repetition of "not we" and "nor yet we" shows the audience how many smaller groups the preamble could have named and did not. Then she reaches the question that her whole argument depends on: "Are women persons?" She adds that she hardly believes any opponent will have "the hardihood to say they are not." This is a reasoning step, because if women are persons, they are citizens, and she goes on to say, "Being persons, then, women are citizens." In this way each statement leads to the next one, and the last step is hard to deny.

Anthony also uses an emotional appeal, but it comes later and is stronger. She says that to women this government is not a democracy or a republic, but "an odious aristocracy; a hateful oligarchy." These are

harsh words. They tell the audience that the men in the room are, in her view, a ruling class. This is risky because she could anger the people she needs, but I think she can afford it, since she has already spent paragraphs on proof. The phrase “this oligarchy of sex” then gives the audience a name for the problem.

The strongest counterclaim is that Anthony’s speech is too angry and too long to persuade a jury. It is long, and some of the charges are bold. But the speech spends most of its time on the Constitution and the Declaration, so the anger is the exception and not the pattern. She is also speaking in her own defense, and a defendant has a right to be forceful.

Anthony also keeps her argument tied to rights that her audience already claims for itself. She says that the government is “based on the idea of the natural right of every individual member thereof to a voice and a vote,” so her listeners cannot reject her claim without rejecting their own. This is a smart choice for her situation.

In conclusion, Anthony persuades through logic first and emotion second. Her situation is a woman on trial speaking to men who may decide her case, and her best choice is to use their own founding documents against the law that charged her. The result is a speech that feels like a lawyer’s argument.

Criterion	Score	Why
Thesis and focus	3	The thesis names the situation and a claim about method (logic first, one emotional charge), and the essay stays on it. It does not yet say what the combination achieves, which a 4 would.
Evidence and analysis	3	Accurate quotations support each point, and the ‘not we, nor yet we’ repetition is explained well. Other quotations (‘under indictment,’ ‘an odious aristocracy; a hateful oligarchy’) are named as devices but only lightly explained, and the counterclaim is answered with a general statement instead of evidence.
Organization	3	The essay moves from the opening to reasoning to emotion, and each paragraph has one job. The transitions are mechanical (‘The first device,’ ‘Her main method,’ ‘In conclusion’), and the final paragraph restates the thesis.
Style and mechanics	3	Clear sentences and an appropriate tone, with the reporter’s name omitted: the essay never says that the text is the version printed in a later history of the suffrage movement. There is a small mix-up in the first paragraph, which calls the speech ‘in the nearby counties’ without naming them.

Score 2 (Developing): “Chief Joseph’s Speech” (Ben, 298 words, 9 of 16)

Chief Joseph gave a speech in 1877 to the American people. He used a lot of rhetoric like pathos, ethos and logos to persuade people. In this essay I will talk about how he used these.

First he used pathos which is emotion. He says “The little children are freezing to death.” This makes the audience feel sad for the children. He also says “It is cold, and we have no blankets.” This shows how bad it was for his people. Pathos is a good way to persuade because people feel sorry for you.

Next he used ethos. Ethos is credibility. Chief Joseph was a chief so he has credibility because everybody knows he is a leader of his people. He says “Our chiefs are killed.” That shows he knows what happened because he was there.

Then he used logos, which is logic. He explains why he is giving up. He says “I am tired of fighting.” That is a reason because when you are tired you cant keep going. The audience can see that it makes sense.

> At the end he says “From where the sun now stands I will fight no more forever.” This is a famous line that shows his decision. It is repetition and also a metaphor for time. He is saying that the fighting is over for him and he wants to look for his children. Joseph also says “Hear me, my chiefs,” which shows he is talking to other people too. I think that was a smart thing to do because it shows he is a leader.
>
> In conclusion Chief Joseph used pathos, ethos and logos in his speech and it was very persuasive. His speech is still famous today because it is so powerful. Anybody who reads it will feel something.

Criterion	Score	Why
Thesis and focus	2	The thesis names three appeals (‘he used pathos, ethos and logos’) but is a list, not a claim about how the speech persuades its audience. The audience is also misidentified: Joseph’s words were a reply to General Howard at the surrender, taken down on the spot.
Evidence and analysis	2	Each quotation is accurate and is attached to an appeal, but the explanations are general (‘this makes the audience feel sad’) and could be written about any speech. The situation (a defeated leader, the Bear Paw Mountains, October 1877) is never described, and ‘metaphor’ and ‘repetition’ are named for a line that uses neither.
Organization	3	The essay has a clear order and one appeal per paragraph, so organization is the strongest part. The opening and ending are generic, and the paragraphs are short.
Style and mechanics	2	Missing apostrophes (‘cant’), repeated sentence patterns (‘He says… That shows…’), vague claims like ‘Anybody who reads it will feel something,’ and no mention that the words come from General Howard’s report as printed in a later book.

Score 1 (Beginning): “Patrick Henry” (Zoe, 174 words, 5 of 16)

> Patrick Henry was a man in the Revolution and he gave a speech about liberty. He said give me liberty or give me death and everyone liked it. He talks about the British and how they are bad. He uses persuasion to get people to fight. The speech is good because it makes people feel like they should fight. He is also saying that we should not wait anymore and he wants to start the war. I think this was a very good speech and it was important. It shows that he was brave and he did not care if he died. In the end the people listened to him and the war started. Patrick Henry is a hero. My favorite part is when he says we should not wait any longer. I think the audience felt the same way because they were tired of the British. The speech is important in history because it shows that people can change things if they speak up. I would have liked to hear it in person.

Criterion	Score	Why
Thesis and focus	1	There is no thesis about how the speech persuades. The essay says the speech is good and that Henry wanted to fight, which is a summary and an opinion.
Evidence and analysis	1	The only words from the speech are the famous line, copied from memory without quotation marks or an explanation, and the claim that ‘the war started’ because of it is not supported. There is no discussion of the audience, the date (1775) or any device.
Organization	2	The paragraph is in a loose order (who he was, what he said, what happened), and there is a sentence of conclusion, so there is some shape. It is one paragraph with no plan.
Style and mechanics	1	Run-on sentences joined with ‘and,’ vague words (‘good,’ ‘bad,’ ‘important’), and no source named. The reader cannot tell which text the student read, so the sources are not cited.

Prompt 5: Creator or Creature?

Score 4 (Strong): "The Creator Owes the Debt" (Owen, 1,021 words, 16 of 16)

> By the end of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, William, Justine, Clerval and Elizabeth are dead, and the book leaves us to ask who is to blame. The easy answer is the creature, because his hands did the killing. But the novel is built so that we hear the story from three narrators, and each of them has a reason to shape what we are told. When I read the 1818 text carefully, I find that the person most responsible is Victor Frankenstein, the creator. He fails the creature when he abandons him, he lets an innocent girl die rather than speak, and, at the end, he states in his own voice that he owed the creature a duty that he did not keep.
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> The first failure is the abandonment. Victor works for two years to make a living being, and in his own account he says that the moment it opens its eyes he feels only "breathless horror and disgust." Then, "Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room" (Shelley, vol. 1, ch. 4). He does not stay to teach it, protect it or even see what it will do. A parent or creator who runs away from a newborn has already left it with a choice that it did not ask for. The creature later says this to Victor directly. He describes himself as someone who "ought to be thy Adam" but who has become "the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed" (vol. 2, ch. 2). Because Victor tells us the creature's words in his own narration, we cannot say that the creature invented the charge. Victor reports it, and he never gives it a real answer.
>
> The second failure is the silence that follows William's murder. Victor knows what has happened when Justine is accused, because he has seen the creature near the place of the crime. He says nothing, and she is condemned. While Justine tries to comfort the family before her execution, he cannot get away from what he did: "But I, the true murderer, felt the never-dying worm alive in my bosom" (vol. 1, ch. 7). He repeats the idea in the next chapter, "I, not in deed, but in effect, was the true murderer" (vol. 2, ch. 1). This is not the creature's excuse. It is Victor's own judgment of himself. A narrator who is trying to look good would not write these sentences, so they carry weight. They show that Victor knows his silence killed Justine, even though no one will ever punish him for it.
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> Victor's way of describing himself adds to the case. After Elizabeth dies, he says, "A fiend had snatched from me every hope of future happiness: no creature had ever been so miserable as I was" (vol. 3, ch. 6). The creature makes almost the same claim for himself: "I am malicious because I am miserable; am I not shunned and hated by all mankind?" (vol. 2, ch. 9). Each calls himself the most wretched being alive, and only one of them has an excuse that begins with the other. The creature's misery starts on the night Victor leaves the room. Victor's own misery, by his account, starts only when the creature begins to kill, and he never asks whether the creature's pain came first. That blind spot is part of the failure.
>
> The third piece of evidence is the clearest, and it comes last. When Victor is dying on Walton's ship, he defends himself for refusing to make a companion for the creature, and in doing so he says something he did not mean to prove. He writes, "I created a rational creature, and was bound towards him, to assure, as far as was in my power, his happiness and well-being" (vol. 3, ch. 7). The word "bound" admits that a duty existed. Victor then explains that another duty was greater, which may be true. But a duty that is outweighed by another is still a duty, and he gives no sign that he ever tried to meet it during the years when the creature was alone.
>
> The strongest counterclaim is that the creature chose to murder, and a choice belongs to the chooser. I agree with the first half. The creature does not hide his guilt: "I have murdered the lovely and the helpless" (vol. 3, ch. 7). Nobody in the book makes him kill a child. And when he says, "Am I to be thought the only criminal, when all human kind sinned against me?" he is arguing more than he is

confessing. Victor even warns Walton about this skill: “He is eloquent and persuasive” (vol. 3, ch. 7), and I take that seriously. The creature may be exaggerating how much blame belongs to others.

Still, being responsible is not the same as being the only one responsible, and the question the novel asks is who is more responsible. The creature tells the story of a person who was abandoned, hated by every house he approached, and treated as a monster before he did anything wrong. He says, “I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend” (vol. 2, ch. 2). We should read that sentence as a reading, since the creature is a speaker with something to gain. But the other evidence supports it. Victor’s own account shows no one teaching, warning or helping the creature, and the first person he kills is William, a small child who could not have understood him. A creator who walks away has left his creation’s choices to chance and to the cruelty of others.

Walton says near the beginning that he will record Victor’s story “as nearly as possible in his own words” (vol. 1, letter 4). That is why the best proof against Victor has to be his own. In these pages Victor writes the charge, admits the guilt and describes the duty. The creature kills, and he should answer for it. But the creator started the chain, saw it, and did nothing, and for that reason his share of the blame is larger.

Criterion	Score	Why
Thesis and focus	4	The thesis names the person most responsible (Victor) and gives three specific failures: abandonment, silence at Justine’s trial, and his own admission of duty. The frame of narrators is used to explain why the evidence comes from Victor’s mouth, which keeps the whole essay focused on the argument.
Evidence and analysis	4	Quotations come from Victor, the creature and Walton, each located by volume and chapter and each explained, for example the point that the word ‘bound’ admits a duty. The counterclaim (the creature chose to kill) is quoted from the creature’s own confession and answered, with the caution that the creature is an interested speaker.
Organization	4	The three failures follow Victor’s own story in time, then the counterclaim, then a paragraph that settles the question of ‘more’ and ‘only’ responsible. The last paragraph returns to Walton and the frame to add a new point instead of repeating the thesis.
Style and mechanics	4	Each quotation is named by speaker, volume and chapter of the 1818 text, as the course asks. Sentences are clear and varied, with no errors that slow the reader.

What lowers the score: The most common drop is a thesis that blames both characters equally, which leaves nothing to prove and holds Thesis and focus at a 2. Retelling the whole plot, from the Arctic frame to the creature’s story, instead of choosing three moments, keeps Evidence and analysis at a 2. Quoting the creature’s speeches as plain facts, without noticing that Victor, and then Walton, are the ones telling them, misses the point of the nested narrators and keeps the essay at a 3. Quotations with no volume and chapter, or taken from a later text of the novel, lower Style and mechanics.

Prompt 6: Nora's Choice, or Two War Poets

Score 4 (Strong): "The Door Nora Has Been Walking Toward" (Lucas, 905 words, 16 of 16)

> At the end of Ibsen's A Doll's House, Nora puts on her cloak, hands back her ring and leaves her husband and her children, and audiences have argued ever since about whether she is right. Some people say that she acts out of sudden anger after one bad night. I argue that her choice is the result of the whole play. Helmer's pet names keep her small, her secret loan proves that she can already act like an adult, and the "wonderful thing" she hopes for fails, so she finally sees her marriage clearly. I quote R. Farquharson Sharp's translation of 1910 throughout, because a translator chooses the words, and I name him whenever the exact wording matters.
>
> The pet names come first, because they show how Helmer sees her. In the first act he asks, "Is my little squirrel out of temper?" (Ibsen, act 1). A squirrel is a small, pretty animal that is easily soothed, and it is never asked for its opinion. Nora knows the game. In act 2, when she wants her husband to keep Krogstad on at the bank, she offers him the picture of herself that he likes: "Your squirrel would run about and do all her tricks if you would be nice, and do what she wants" (act 2). In act 3 she uses the same word to describe what the pet names always meant: "I have existed merely to perform tricks for you, Torvald" (act 3). The word "tricks" links the early scene to the last. She has understood that her charm was a job, and that she was paid for it with affection.
>
> Her secret loan shows that the doll was never the whole person. In act 1 she tells Mrs Linde, "It was I who saved Torvald's life," because she found the money for the trip to Italy that cured him. Mrs Linde objects that this is impossible, since "a wife cannot borrow without her husband's consent" (act 1), and the play lets us see how little the law allows her. Nora does it anyway, and later admits, "I forged a name" (act 2). The forgery is a crime, and the play does not hide that. But it also shows her courage, patience and skill with money. A woman who has spent years in secret paying off a debt does not become a doll again. So when she says at the end that she wants to educate herself, we can believe that she has the strength to do it.
>
> The turning point is the "wonderful thing." Nora tells Helmer that she has "waited so patiently for eight years" for him to take the blame for her, and she explains why it matters. When Krogstad's letter comes, Helmer is afraid, and she says that "it was not fear for what threatened me, but for what might happen to you." That sentence is the center of the play. It tells us that Helmer's love is mostly about himself. Then, when he is safe, he treats everything as if nothing happened, and she says, "Exactly as before, I was your little skylark, your doll." At that moment she knows the pet names have not changed. Her decision comes from watching what he does, so it is not an outburst.
>
> Her last speech sounds like an argument, and it is one. Helmer says, "Before all else, you are a wife and a mother." Nora does not shout back. She says, "I don't believe that any longer. I believe that before all else I am a reasonable human being, just as you are." She calls her state of mind "so clear and certain," and she reasons from it. The same calm is in her line "I must stand quite alone, if I am to understand myself and everything about me." She is not leaving to find a new husband or a new house. She is leaving because she cannot think as long as someone else thinks for her.
>
> The hardest counterclaim is that she abandons her children. Helmer says it directly: "To desert your home, your husband and your children!" Many readers agree with him, and the play does not pretend that the choice is easy. She does not explain it as a rejection of them, though. She says, "I am not fit for the task. There is another task I must undertake first," and, "I know they are in better hands than mine." I think she is wrong to hope that it will hurt them so little, and Ibsen may agree, since she will

> not even see them before she goes. But her logic holds together: she was raised as a doll, and she knows that a doll cannot teach a child to be a person.
>
> The ending shows that different translators hear the same hope. In Sharp's version she says, "the most wonderful thing of all would have to happen," while William Archer's translation of 1889 has her say, "then the miracle of miracles would have to happen." The words differ, but both lines ask for the same thing, a change in both people that makes the marriage real. The door that shuts at the end is the answer to the question the play has been asking since the first pet name: can a person be loved as a doll and still grow up? Nora finds that she cannot, and she leaves to find out who she is.

Criterion	Score	Why
Thesis and focus	4	The thesis argues that Nora's choice grows from the whole play and gives three supports (pet names, the loan, the failed 'wonderful thing'). Each body paragraph opens with one of them, and the translator is named at the start because it affects the quotations.
Evidence and analysis	4	Quotations are located by act and explained, for instance the link from 'tricks' in act 2 to 'tricks' in act 3, and the reading of 'it was not fear for what threatened me' as the center of the play. The counterclaim about the children is quoted from Helmer, answered with Nora's own reasoning, and given a fair limit.
Organization	4	The order follows the play (act 1 names, act 2 loan, act 3 speech) and builds toward the last scene. The conclusion adds a new point about the translators' wording and returns to the first pet name, which gives a sense of completion.
Style and mechanics	4	Quotations are introduced with the speaker or the act, Sharp and Archer are named, and the literary present is held. The prose is clear and varied, with very few errors.

What lowers the score: The most common drop is a thesis that says Nora is 'brave and also selfish' and never chooses, which holds Thesis and focus at a 2. Retelling the plot of the three acts keeps Evidence and analysis at a 2, and quoting only the last scene, without showing how it grows from earlier ones, keeps it at a 3. Treating one view of the ending as a fact, or skipping the children, leaves out the counterclaim the prompt expects. Quoting without naming the translator, or mixing words from two translations as if they were one text, costs points in Style and mechanics.

Prompt 7: A Question Worth Arguing

Score 4 (Strong): "Keep the Dunmore School, and Pay the Debt Anyway" (Sam, 1,243 words, 16 of 16)

> Next month the town council of Pell Harbor will vote on whether to sell the old Dunmore School for $240,000 and use the money to pay down the town's $310,000 debt. I read both numbers on the agenda notice at the town clerk's counter. People who favor the sale call it common sense: the building is old, the roof needs about $60,000 of work, and the heating bill is about $9,000 a year. But the Dunmore School is not empty. On Tuesday and Thursday nights, volunteers teach free classes there in reading, English and high-school equivalency, and the downstairs reading room stays open until nine. The ethical question is what a town owes the people who live in it. I think it owes them two things at once, honest books and places to learn. My claim is that the council should keep the building and pay the debt by other means, because the sale would give up a lasting good in order to meet a goal that other choices can also meet.
>
> Both sides can quote George Washington, so I begin with him. In his Farewell Address of 1796 he urges, "Promote, then, as an object of primary importance, institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge." He gives a reason: "In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened." A town meeting is a small version of that structure. When Pell Harbor votes on a budget, the votes are only as good as what the voters know, and a night class that helps adults read a ballot or a budget is just the kind of institution he means. But Washington also tells his readers to avoid "the accumulation of debt" and not to be "throwing upon posterity the burthen, which we ourselves ought to bear." The people who want to sell the school are right to quote that line. Still, I do not read Washington as asking us to choose between his two duties, because he asks for both in the same speech. He also names the method for paying debts: "vigorous exertions in time of peace to discharge the debts." The method is effort and saving, and he never says to sell off the places where a community learns. His words give me a test for a good plan: it should pay the debt and keep the school.
>
> A second source explains why a real room matters and not only an idea. In 1929 Virginia Woolf argued that "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction," and near the end of her book she states the principle more widely: "Intellectual freedom depends upon material things" (Woolf, ch. 6). Woolf was writing about women who wanted to write, and I am not saying that the Dunmore students are the same. I am borrowing her principle, which is that thinking needs a place and some hours that belong to the thinker. When I read the sign-up sheet last Thursday, I counted twenty-two names, and the volunteer at the door told me most of the students work during the day. For adults who share small apartments and finish work at five, the Dunmore classroom is the "room" in Woolf's sense. Sale supporters answer that the classes can move to the town hall, but the town hall closes at five. A class that loses its room also loses the evening hours when its students are free. One student, who drives a school bus in the mornings, told me that Thursday is the only night she can study for her equivalency exam, because it is the only night her sister can watch her children. If the class is moved to a day or a distant building, that plan falls apart. This is where Washington and Woolf meet: the public duty to spread knowledge is carried out in actual rooms, and when the room goes, the duty goes with it.
>
> The third source is about the vote itself. At the last town meeting a show of hands favored the sale, 61 to 40, and some neighbors say that settles the matter. Henry David Thoreau asks, "Can there not be a government in which the majorities do not virtually decide right and wrong, but conscience?" He adds that majorities should "decide only those questions to which the rule of expediency is applicable." I think Thoreau would let a majority decide a great deal in Pell Harbor, including which repair plan to

buy. Selling a building is mostly a question of expediency, and I accept that. But part of this question is not. Whether a town may sell the one free classroom to the people who depend on it is a matter of fairness, and a vote of 61 to 40 can tell us the majority's wish but cannot tell us whether the minority's loss is fair. I am not asking the council to ignore the vote. I am asking it to look at who pays the cost of the vote.

The strongest objection is the debt itself. A debt of $310,000 is real, and Washington's line about posterity is aimed straight at it. I agree that the debt has to be paid, and I would be wrong to treat it as someone else's problem. The sale is not the only way, though. The same agenda notice lists the gravel lot behind the school for $90,000. Selling the lot would cover nearly a third of the debt, and six yearly payments of about $37,000 would pay off the rest. That is the kind of "vigorous exertions" Washington describes, and it keeps the room. Opponents also point out that the building costs money. With the roof, it would cost the town about $150,000 over ten years, and I do not hide that number. It is why I ask the council to sell the lot and repair the roof in two stages, and not to do nothing. Another neighbor wrote to the paper that taxpayers who never use the classes should not pay for them. That is a fair feeling, but it proves too much. Almost nobody uses every public service, since I have never used the snowplow garage or the cemetery, and we pay for them because a town is a shared thing. Washington's phrase "general diffusion of knowledge" makes the same point about learning. The benefit of an adult who can read a contract or help a child with homework does not stay with that adult. It spreads through the town, and that is why the cost is shared. The cost of keeping the school is real, but so is the cost of losing it, and only one of those costs is a loss that cannot be undone.

A town's choices tell its young people what it values. If Pell Harbor sells the Dunmore School to meet one number on a spreadsheet, it will say that learning is the first thing to give up when money is tight. If it keeps the school and pays the debt, as Washington asked on both counts, it will say that a town can be careful and generous at the same time. The council does not have to pick between them. It has to be willing to do the harder work of finding a plan that serves both duties, and I hope it will. I would rather live in the second town.

Criterion	Score	Why
Thesis and focus	4	The question is stated as an ethical one (what a town owes its people), and the claim is precise and arguable: keep the building and pay the debt by other means. Every paragraph serves it, including the source paragraphs, which each end by tying back to the claim.
Evidence and analysis	4	Three real sources (Washington, Woolf, Thoreau) are used for what they actually say, and the writer limits Woolf's reach by noting that she wrote about women who write. The sources talk to each other (Washington's two duties, then Woolf on rooms, then Thoreau on votes), and the strongest objection, the debt, is stated fairly and answered with a concrete plan.
Organization	4	The introduction frames the question and the claim; each body paragraph adds a source and links back; the objection comes after the support; and the conclusion looks forward to what the vote says about the town. Transitions such as 'This is where Washington and Woolf meet' show how the parts connect.
Style and mechanics	4	The tone is formal enough for a council audience and still direct, quotations are introduced and cited by author (and chapter for Woolf), and the sentences vary. The numbers in the debt plan are stated clearly, with the sale-or-keep choices set side by side.

Score 3 (Competent): "Pay the Debt First" (Reese, 600 words, 12 of 16)

The town council of Pell Harbor is voting on whether to sell the old Dunmore School for $240,000. The money would go toward the town's $310,000 debt. Some people want to keep the school because of the free night classes. I think the council should sell it, because a town has a duty to pay its debts, the vote shows what the majority wants, and the classes can move to another room.

The first reason is the debt. George Washington warned in his Farewell Address about "the accumulation of debt," and he said that a government should avoid "throwing upon posterity the burthen, which we ourselves ought to bear." If Pell Harbor keeps the debt, the next generation will pay for what we already used. The building also has a $60,000 roof and costs about $9,000 a year to heat. Selling it would pay most of the debt in one step, so the town would not pay interest for years. Washington also says that a government should "cherish public credit." A town that pays what it owes will find it easier to borrow later.

The second reason is the vote. At the last town meeting a show of hands favored the sale, 61 to 40. Some people say the minority is being ignored, but Henry David Thoreau, who often defended the individual, still said that majorities may "decide only those questions to which the rule of expediency is applicable." Selling a building is a question of expediency, because it is about money and use, not about right and wrong. So I think the majority should decide it.

The third reason is that the classes do not need this building. Virginia Woolf wrote that "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction." What the students need is a room, and the town could give them one. The library has meeting rooms, and the town hall could be opened a few nights a week. This costs much less than a roof and a heating bill, because only the lights and a staff member would be needed for four evenings. Then the volunteers could keep teaching, and the town would still get its money.

Some people will say that a library meeting room is not the same as a classroom, and I think that is a small problem. A table, some chairs and a whiteboard are all that a reading class needs. The volunteers have taught in worse places, and they would likely rather keep teaching than lose the building and the program together. The town could also ask the buyer to rent space back to the classes for a low price, which would solve the problem of the room and the debt at the same time.

The best argument against selling is that the classes are good for the town. I agree that they are good, and I would not want them to end. But if the school stays open, the town has to spend money on the roof and the heat, and the money would come from taxes. Also, the sale does not end the classes, because the council can make a rule to protect them. People who are against the sale should think about the debt as well.

In conclusion, Pell Harbor should sell the Dunmore School. Washington teaches that debt should be paid, Thoreau allows a majority to decide a question like this, and Woolf shows that students need a room but not necessarily this one. The council can sell the building and keep the classes if it plans carefully.

Criterion	Score	Why
Thesis and focus	3	The claim (sell the school) is clear and answers the prompt's question, and the three reasons are listed in the first paragraph. It is stated as a preference more than as an ethical position, and the stakes for the people who use the classes are not named.
Evidence and analysis	3	Three real sources are quoted accurately, and each supports a reason. They speak in turn instead of to each other, and the Woolf quotation is stretched: she wrote that a writer needs a room, which the student reads as 'any room will do' without saying why the late hours matter. The counterclaim is answered with a promise ('the council can make a rule') and no evidence.
Organization	3	The plan is clear and each paragraph has one reason. The transitions are mechanical ('The first reason,' 'The second reason,' 'In conclusion'), and the last paragraph mostly restates the introduction.
Style and mechanics	3	The prose is clear and the tone suits the topic, and sources are named in the text. A few sentences are stiff, and the essay never gives a chapter for Woolf or a date for Washington, so the citations are incomplete.

Score 2 (Developing): "Dont Sell Our School" (Tessa, 328 words, 9 of 16)

> **The town of Pell Harbor wants to sell the old Dunmore School and I think this is wrong. The school is where lots of people go to learn on Tuesday and Thursday nights and its a important part of our town. If the council sells it then people will lose a place to learn and that is not fair.**
>
> **George Washington said that we should have "institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge." That means schools and libraries. The Dunmore School is a school so it should stay open. Also Virginia Woolf wrote a book called A Room of One's Own which says everybody needs a room. So the Dunmore School is like a room for the people who go there.**
>
> **Everyone in town knows that the school is important. My neighbor says she learned English there and now she has a job. My grandpa says it was his school when he was a kid. If the council sells it, next they will sell the library and the park and then there will be nothing left in town. I think the council should think about what the people want, because it is a democracy. A council is supposed to listen to its citizens, and if they sell the school they are not listening. The people who go to the classes should get to say what happens to the building, since it is their school.**
>
> **The council says they need the money for the debt. But I think they should find the money somewhere else, like having a bake sale or asking the people who live here to give money. Education is also very important for a town because it makes everybody smarter and then the town makes more money. That is why selling the school is a bad idea.**
>
> **In conclusion the Dunmore School should not be sold because it is important to our town and it helps people. I hope the council will make the right choice.**

Criterion	Score	Why
Thesis and focus	2	The first paragraph gives an opinion ('this is wrong') but not an arguable claim with reasons, and it never says what the writer wants the council to do instead. The prompt asks for an ethical question and a precise position.
Evidence and analysis	2	Only two of the sources are used, each in one sentence, and the Woolf book is misread: she wrote about a room for women writers, not a right to a room for everyone. The rest is personal stories and general claims. The essay also uses the slippery slope ('next they will sell the library and the park') and 'everyone knows,' two of the fallacies from unit 21.
Organization	3	The essay has a clear opening, three body paragraphs and a close, and each paragraph is about one idea. The transitions are minimal, and the counterclaim (the debt) is placed near the end where it gets only two sentences.
Style and mechanics	2	Missing apostrophes in the title and in 'its a important,' vague words ('important,' 'good,' 'smarter'), sources named but not cited (no year for Washington's address, no chapter for Woolf), and a repetitive final paragraph.

Score 1 (Beginning): "The School" (Cole, 146 words, 5 of 16)

> **I think the town should not sell the old school. Its a good place and many people go there. My grandpa went there and he said it was great. If they sell it some company will tear it down and build something else and the town will be worse. The town has debt but they can just not spend money on other stuff. Also there was a president named George Washington who said we should have schools so selling a school is against what he said. A lot of people agree with me so the town should listen. I dont know why they would want to sell it anyway. It is not right. The school has been there for a long time and it should stay there. I hope the town does the right thing and keeps it so that kids and adults can still learn.**

Criterion	Score	Why
Thesis and focus	1	The opening sentence is a position, but the essay gives no reasons that connect to an ethical question and drifts into guesses about what will happen to the building.
Evidence and analysis	1	There are no real sources: Washington is mentioned from memory and not quoted, and his idea (a general diffusion of knowledge) is changed into 'we should have schools.' The rest is a grandfather's opinion and the claim that 'a lot of people agree.' The counterclaim about debt is waved away with 'they can just not spend money.'
Organization	2	The paragraph moves from the position to a reason to a conclusion in a rough order, but it is a single paragraph with no plan or transitions, so it can only reach a low 2.
Style and mechanics	1	Run-ons, missing apostrophes ('Its,' 'dont'), vague words ('stuff,' 'good') and no citations. The essay does not meet the prompt's requirement of three sources.

Prompt 8: The Research Paper

Score 4 (Strong): "The Letters Brutus Reads: How Shakespeare Moved the Blame" (Mei, 892 words, 16 of 16)

> In Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, Brutus is pushed toward murder by a letter that someone leaves in his house at night. In Plutarch's Life of Brutus, the book Shakespeare drew on, the pressure comes from a different source. My research question is how Shakespeare changed the push that moves Brutus to join the conspiracy, and what the change does to our view of him. I argue that Shakespeare turned Plutarch's open calls from many Romans into a forgery arranged by Cassius, and that this makes Brutus both more responsible for his own reasoning and easier to manipulate, so the play shows an honourable man being used.
>
> I used six sources. The primary sources are Shakespeare's play, Plutarch's "Marcus Brutus" in the Dryden and Clough edition, and Walter Skeat's 1875 edition of Thomas North's 1579 translation of Plutarch. Skeat matters because the 1911 Britannica article on North says that Shakespeare took the material for Julius Caesar from North's Plutarch, and not from the later Clough edition ("North, Sir Thomas"). The same notes appear in North's version, so the change I describe belongs to Shakespeare and not to a modern translator. The secondary sources are the Britannica articles on Brutus, Cassius and North. They are over a century old, so I used them only for facts about the Romans and about Shakespeare's sources, and I checked each fact against Plutarch. I also kept my notes in three columns, for direct quotation, paraphrase and my own comments, so that I could tell them apart when I drafted.
>
> [Section 1 of the paper, on Plutarch's account, is not shown in this excerpt.]
>
> Plutarch describes pressure from many directions. Under the statue of Brutus's ancestor, Romans wrote "O that we had a Brutus now!" and Brutus's chair as praetor was covered each morning with notes such as "You are asleep, Brutus" (Plutarch). Plutarch adds that Brutus was pushed on by "letters and invitations from unknown citizens." North's wording, as Skeat prints it, calls these notes "bills" and says that Brutus's friends and countrymen called on him openly (Skeat). In Plutarch, then, the writer of the notes is Rome itself. Cassius is present too, but separately and in person: he "continually fired and stirred him up," and Plutarch sums up the difference between them in one line, "Brutus felt the rule an oppression, but Cassius hated the ruler."
>
> Shakespeare joins the two threads. In act 1, scene 2, after Brutus leaves, Cassius tells the audience, "I will this night, / In several hands, in at his windows throw, / As if they came from several citizens" (Shakespeare 1.2). The words "As if" announce that the citizens are a disguise. Cassius also says why it will work, since he thinks Brutus's "honourable metal may be wrought / From that it is dispos'd" (1.2), which means that a good man can be bent. In act 2, scene 1, Lucius finds a paper, and Brutus reads, "Brutus, thou sleep'st: awake!" (2.1). The line is Plutarch's "You are asleep, Brutus" in Shakespeare's words, but the sender has changed from the crowd to one man.
>
> The change does two things. It makes Brutus easier to fool. He tells himself, "Such instigations have been often dropp'd / Where I have took them up" (2.1), so he treats the notes as the voice of Rome, while the audience knows they come from one hand. At the same time, it makes his decision more his own. Before Lucius brings the paper, Brutus has already reasoned, "It must be by his death: and for my part, / I know no personal cause to spurn at him, / But for the general" (2.1). The letter does not change his mind. It gives him a picture to match it, since he answers with the thought that his ancestors "did from the streets of Rome / The Tarquin drive" (2.1).

A reader could object that Plutarch's Cassius is also a schemer, so Shakespeare changed very little. That is partly true. But in Plutarch the notes are a public fact that Brutus can see for himself, and the persuading happens in conversation. In Shakespeare the public fact has become a lie. The Britannica agrees that Shakespeare reshaped both men. Its writers judge his Brutus to be a kinder picture than the history supports, and his Cassius to be vivid but only loosely true to the record ("Brutus"; "Cassius"). I use those judgments only as hints, and the plot supports them. A purer Brutus and a more cunning Cassius suit a play about trust.

[Section 3, on how the funeral speeches use the word "honourable," is not shown in this excerpt.]

Shakespeare's change moves the weight of the plot from a crowd to a plotter. Plutarch's Romans ask Brutus to act, and Shakespeare's Cassius invents the asking. The result is a Brutus who earns the word "honourable" by thinking for himself, and who is still used by a man who does not share his motives. That is the hinge on which the play turns later, when Antony says "For Brutus is an honourable man" again and again. My research has limits. I read Plutarch in an edition later than the one Shakespeare used, and I read all three works in English, so my claim concerns the English texts. Within those limits, the evidence is clear that the forged letters are Shakespeare's own addition.

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Criterion	Score	Why
Question and thesis	4	The question is narrow and answerable (how Shakespeare changed the push on Brutus and what that does to our view of him), and the thesis is arguable: the change makes Brutus both more responsible and easier to manipulate. The conclusion returns to it and states the limits of the claim.
Sources: range, credibility and synthesis	4	There are six sources, three of them primary, and the student checks each one: Skeat is added to show that North's wording (the text Shakespeare actually read) also has the notes, and the Britannica entries are used only for facts. Sources talk to each other, for example the objection about Plutarch's Cassius is answered with both texts and the Britannica's judgment of Shakespeare's portraits.
Organization and development	4	The introduction gives the question, thesis and a source report; the body section moves from Plutarch to Shakespeare to the effect to the objection; and the conclusion adds a connection to Antony's speech and the limits of the research. The bracketed lines mark where the omitted sections of the full paper would be.
Citation, integration and conventions (MLA)	4	Quotations are short and explained, verse breaks are marked with slashes, and each is cited in MLA form: act and scene for the play, author or title for the other sources. Every in-text citation matches an entry in the works cited list, which is alphabetical and gives the real edition, date and URL.

Question and thesis: a question that is too broad ('How did Shakespeare use Plutarch?') or a thesis that only says the two works differ keeps the paper at a 2, because it has nothing to prove. Sources: range, credibility and synthesis: six sources that are all websites or encyclopedias, with no check of their authors or dates, or sources that speak one after another with no connection, hold the paper at a 3 or a 2. Organization and development: a paper that follows the order of the sources instead of its own claims, or that stops at the evidence without an objection or a limit, loses a level. Citation, integration and conventions (MLA): quotations that are long and unexplained, a works cited list that does not match the in-text citations, or paraphrase that follows the source's sentences too closely cost points, and copying without citation moves the score toward a 1.

Parent grading sheet

Student _____ Course _____ Prompt _____

Date assigned · draft · final _____ Word count _____ Citation style (if any) _____

Criterion	Score (1-4)	Comments: one strength, one thing to change
Thesis and focus		
Evidence and analysis		
Organization		
Style and mechanics		
Total (of 16)		Grade:

Revision

Revision requested? Yes / No · Due: _____ · Revised score: _____ of 16

Next skill to work on

_____

_____

_____

Parent signature _____ Date _____

Writing record

Keep one record per student per year. It is the evidence of a writing-intensive course: what was assigned, how many drafts, and the grade. Keep the essays themselves with it.

Student _____ School year _____ Course(s) _____

Date	Course	Prompt	Words	Drafts	Score /16	Grade

Essays completed _____ Total words of finished writing _____ Parent signature and date _____

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