

English II Policies & Reference, 2025-2026  
Haywood Early College / Hanson

Availability

My email is [dhanson@haywood.k12.nc.us](mailto:dhanson@haywood.k12.nc.us) and I am, more or less, always in my room. I am specifically available for help at the following times:

Monday: 11:30 - 12:10

Wednesday: 12:10 - 12:45

If you do have any issues you should contact me ASAP, particularly if you have an issue that deserves an extension of any kind.

**I do not use Remind. Either see me directly or use my email.**

Course Content

Course content, and every assignment, can be found on Google Classroom. All students and many parents already have access. If you are a parent or guardian, and do not have access but would like to, please email me at [dhanson@haywood.k12.nc.us](mailto:dhanson@haywood.k12.nc.us) and I'll add you.

Electronic devices & Screens

Electronic devices - laptops, iPads, cellphones, headphones, EarPods, etc. - whether personal or issued by the school - must be kept out of sight at all times unless I have specifically allowed them for a limited time to accomplish a specific task.

Having electronics out when not allowed will be punishable by a referral to the principal.

Having electronics out when taking any kind of test, quiz, or any assignment where you may not use outside sources will be taken to be cheating, punishable by a grade of zero on the assignment and a referral to the principal.

Required Materials

You'll be hand-writing during much of the class for both note-taking and written assignments. You'll need paper and a dark blue or black pen or pencil at all times. Be sure to have these each day. I will not provide these. If you don't have them and can't borrow from a fellow student, you will not be able to complete the assignment during class and will receive a grade of zero.

I suggest getting a college ruled spiral notebook with perforations so you can cleanly remove pages when needed.

Macbooks

Feel free to use a Macbook from the cart when needed for specific tasks and when electronic devices are allowed for use. Put them back on the same shelf they came from, be sure to plug them back into their charger, and be sure to tuck the loose charger card back into its shelf. Guest login: hec-guest, password: hec.

### How to Turn in Work

Most assignments will have a two-step process. The assignment must be first written by hand on paper during class time. The hand-written response will serve as a ticket that will allow you to move to the second step. Before the end of class, you'll need to create a digital copy (I suggest using the scan function in the Apple Notes app) and submit it in the appropriate assignment in Google Classroom. This digital copy must be legible (both in terms of the handwriting and its conversion to a digital copy).

Unless I've granted an exception for that particular assignment, all work must be turned in before the end of class to receive credit. If your work is incomplete, turn in what you have.

No assignment that requires a hand-written version will be accepted without one.

The second step requires you to create a typed version of the hand-written assignment. This is the version that will receive a grade (no hand-written version will be graded). When typing up your hand-written assignment, you may only make minor corrections - fixing a misspelled word, correcting punctuation, or adding or deleting a single word within a sentence. You may not make changes greater than those. If you do, your grade may be penalized or even receive a grade of zero, at my discretion. You will attach your typed versions to the appropriate Google Classroom assignment to turn it in.

I may provide you with time in class to type, but if you are not able to finish the typing in the time provided, you must complete it outside of class.

You may find it helpful to practice typing if you're not already proficient. Consider these websites: Nitrotype.com, MonkeyType.com, & TypeRacer.com.

### Grading

Grades will be assigned to one general category but assigned weights depending on the relative value of the assignment. Assignments will be designated as either practice or assessment. Assignments noted as practice will be more numerous, graded leniently, and weighted lightly and are designed for you to develop skills and knowledge. Assignments that count as assessment will be fewer, graded strictly, weighted heavily and are designed for you to demonstrate your mastery of those skills and knowledge.

### Tutorial Sessions

Tutorial sessions are available during the times listed at the top of the page. If your grade is below an 80, you'll need to attend at least one session per week until you can pull your grade back to an 80 or better. Failing to do so will result in an email to Ms. Fox to let her know and she'll take care of it from there.

### Turn in Work through Google Classroom, Properly

When your work is complete in Google Classroom, be sure to mark it complete. Failing to do so may lead to a reduced grade as late work.

### Late Work

Assignments must be completed in class on the day assigned. Assignments will be crafted such that students with extended time accommodations will have sufficient time to complete each assignment during class time. Our biggest writing assignments will be in-class essays with a completion time of 50 minutes. Students with a time and a half accommodation will be allowed 75 minutes to finish.

If work is not turned in by the end of class, it will receive a grade of zero. It will not be accepted late. If your work is not complete, you should still turn in whatever you managed to complete.

If students are absent or check-in or out of class such that they lack time to complete assigned work, students must attend one of the next two available AEO sessions to complete the assignment or see me about an extension if circumstances warrant.

In the case of extended absences, see me and we can work out a schedule to make up missing work.

### Extra-Credit

No extra-credit assignments will be given. You should keep your grades up from the start of the semester.

### Food & Drink

Water and healthy snacks are allowed only if consumed in a non-disruptive manner. School lunches are allowed if your schedule restricts your ordinary time to eat. Fast food, candy, sugary drinks, etc. are not allowed.

### Punctuality

Class begins precisely at the start time. I expect you to be in your seat and ready to go. Anything less - even a second or two - will be counted as tardy. Do not ask to leave class to go to the bathroom or fill up a water bottle during the first half of class.

If you come to class late without an excuse while we are working on in-class writing, you will not be allowed any additional time.

### Artificial Intelligence & The Internet

Artificial intelligence in all its forms is not permitted and its use will be considered cheating, receiving a grade of zero and referral to the principal.

**Never, ever, ever look through the internet for answers or analysis** of the material we are covering. Do not visit sites like SparkNotes or Schmoop or anything similar. I will consider that to be plagiarism (the stealing of ideas) and will likely assign a grade of zero for any relevant assignment. This class is designed to help you learn how to think critically and that will not happen if you seek out someone else's thoughts on the internet.

### Goals

- \* To be able to read and comprehend complex works and discuss the same analytically and rigorously.
- \* To be able to write at a level sufficient for success at a competitive four-year college.

Plenty of work needs to be done to meet these goals. In this class, we are going to go through each step in the process that you need to do to be successful in this class. Do each step, carefully and conscientiously, and you will do well in this class. Always follow directions as written.

Though we will be going over strategies in detail for these steps, I have included a reference guide of sorts that you might find helpful early in the class should you need guidance.

### How to Read

When reading for class, always read with a purpose. For this class that purpose is to understand a text and be prepared to bring that understanding to class to share it with others. By understanding a text I mean that you can do one or more of the following:

- \* Explain how the author uses the formal elements of the work (e.g., characters, setting, tone, symbols, conflict, etc.) to achieve some purpose (tone, theme, characterization, etc.).
- \* Explain how the work relates to something else, something academic. English works best as an interdisciplinary subject, drawing on history and psychology and philosophy and economics and political science and art and all of those areas of learning we tend to group under the larger heading of the humanities. Explaining how a work fits into the ideas of other disciplines works well for class discussion.
- \* Consider any question that fits in with any of the critical approaches (from the other document in this set).
- \* Explain how the themes or ideas of a work are reflected in contemporary events. If the works we are reading are at all universal, then the ideas are not limited to a particular place and time but should be observable here and now. Finding connections between the text and today's news serves as a valid topic of discussion in this class.

Note that the ideas above go beyond simply understanding the actions of a text. It's simply not enough to read a selection and come in with the knowledge of who did what.

### How to Discuss

Discussion is the bridge to understanding a text. It allows us, as a class, to sift through various viewpoints and sort out what works and what does not. Discussion is vital to the final stage of the process - writing - which depends on having clear, accurate, insightful ideas to share.

Discussion works best when it is led by the group and not myself. I expect each student to be able to come to class with an idea ready to share (something that fits any of the three bullet points under "How to Read"). During class discussion, you must:

- \* Be attentive listeners. Show your engagement through your body language. Look at the talker. Don't fiddle with your personal items or whisper to others. It is alright to take notes, but be sure to orient your body toward the speaker, and look up from your note-taking at times.
- \* Stay on topic. Allow topics to develop and evolve. If someone brings up an idea for the significance of a particular relationship between two characters, do not then try to shift the topic to something else. Let that idea bounce around a few times and be resolved in some way before shifting to something else.
- \* Be respectful of each other. It is my experience that many students fear sounding stupid and choose to avoid speaking up as a result. As an individual and as a class, we need to be okay with taking risks and being wrong and one of the keys to that is treating each other with respect. Do not interrupt each other. If you build off of someone else's ideas, mention them by name. Do not take criticisms of your ideas as personal attacks, and never engage in personal attacks of another.
- \* Be critical of each other's ideas. While always being respectful of each other, it is essential that we learn to rebut each other's arguments. Discussion should be a struggle where only the best ideas

survive. If an idea fails in some way - maybe it is not supported by elements of the text, or relies on a poor interpretation of a passage - it is up to you to point it out.

\* Be sure to take part in discussion but not to monopolize it. It is not acceptable to remain silent. At the same time, do not overdo it. If you have a lot to say, speak up, but avoid monopolizing discussion.

### The Essential Question

The essential question is always the same, and it proceeds from the following assumptions:

- 1) The artist, whether a novelist or poet, director or painter, has something, an idea, an emotion, whatever, that they are attempting to convey to the audience.
- 2) Whether they are conscious of doing so or not (hint: the better artists do their art deliberately), artists will use various devices to achieve these effects.

These two assumptions lead us to the focus of the class: This class, and the analysis we write in it, will focus on illuminating the connection between various devices and the effect they produce.

**Thus our essential question is: How does the artist use X in order to achieve Y?**

When we flip this around, we get our basic format for our thesis statement: Explain how X does Y, where X is something observed and Y is some insight into the significance of X – why it matters or what it does that we care about.

Here are some examples, with the X section underlined, and the Y section in italics:

- \* In “To Paint a Water Lily,” Ted Hughes uses imagery *to show the difficulty inherent in the artist’s task to make grotesque nature appear attractive.*
- \* In Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*, the passage of time in the play is uncertain *and this supports the play’s theme that life is a confused struggle for meaning which likely does not even exist.*
- \* *Never Let Me Go* uses grey diction and imagery in its setting *to create an isolated and reserved tone* while *All The Pretty Horses* uses red diction and imagery in its setting *to create a passionate and emotional tone.*
- \* Her dynamic character arc, that moves her from preacher’s daughter to African wife, *reinforces the anti-Western, pro-African theme of the novel.* (Refers to Leah Price from *The Poisonwood Bible*.)

Important note: this is not limited to literature. Most college courses examine how observable phenomena relate to something else. In history, this might be a certain number of reasons for the decline and fall of the Roman empire, where the reasons are the X and the fall of the empire is the Y. In biology, this might be the relationship between factors like light and fertilizer in the growth of a particular species of plant. The X factors would be light and fertilizer and the Y would be its resulting growth.

### Writing Reference

**The thesis statement** - The paper’s central idea should be expressed in a single sentence - the thesis statement - found, most typically, at the end of your introductory paragraph. It should explain how

something you have observed is significant in some way. In English II, we will most commonly analyze literary works formally, that is, by explaining how particular literary elements work to produce some overall effect. Consider the following prompts from previous Advanced Placement Literature exams to get a sense of what is being asked:

- a) . . . write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how Shakespeare uses elements such as allusion, figurative language, and tone to convey Wolsey's complex response to his dismissal from court.
- b) . . . write an essay in which you analyze how the author's use of language generates a vivid impression of Quoye as a character.
- c) . . . write a well-developed essay in which you analyze how Erdrich depicts the impact of the environment on the two children. You may wish to consider such literary devices as tone, imagery, selection of detail, and point of view.

A strong thesis of this sort connects specific devices to a particular effect. Always be specific. For example, a reasonable thesis for A above would be:

Biblical allusions and a self-deprecating tone reveal Wolsey's despair and enlightenment upon his dismissal from court.

So here the thesis is a restatement of the question, with the key parts made specific. What elements are being used? Allusion and tone. What kind of allusions? Biblical ones. What kind of tone? A self-deprecating one. What is Wolsey's complex response? Complex suggests something with at least two components, and here he is in despair over the loss of his position, but also enlightened about the nature of pride and man, something that may have seemed abstract to him before but is now far more tangible.

Note you could easily write this as: Shakespeare uses Biblical allusions and a self-deprecating tone to reveal Wolsey's despair and enlightenment upon his dismissal from court. There is nothing terribly wrong with this sentence, but it contains a layer of information ("Shakespeare uses") that is largely unnecessary and my suggestion would be to cut it as it is above.

This is not the only way to write a thesis statement in English II class, but it is the most common for this class. No matter what though, your thesis should detail some observable phenomenon and why it matters (state what you have observed, ask yourself "so what?", and make sure you have an answer to that question in your thesis). It should express this relationship in a single sentence (note that it is possible that a thesis might need more than a single sentence to express, but that is far enough into your academic future - graduate school and beyond - that we are not going to worry about it).

Formal analysis, one of the main approaches we will use this year, means that we will tend to focus on the text itself and not on any outside sources such as histories or biographies. It also means that the insight bit of the thesis statement will usually be related to tone or theme. So if you figure out an important theme in the work and you observe some literary devices which reinforce that theme, you have the raw materials you need for an excellent thesis statement.

When developing a thesis based on formal analysis consider this basic template:

X [some literary device or devices] develop/highlight/produce/reinforce, etc. Y [where Y is some effect created, often a tone or theme].

Here are a few examples of this idea in action that I've pulled from the last few semesters of English II papers. As in the essential question section above, the X section is underlined and the Y section is in italics. Note that there can be more than one X (e.g., in the third example below), but there is rarely more than a single Y.

- \* Dostoevsky uses dialogue to highlight the differences between Raskolnikov and Svidrigailov, *revealing the contrast between the ordinary and extraordinary man.*
- \* The figurative language used in *Richard III* highlights and emphasizes Richard's abhorrent qualities *and contributes to his characterization as the villain.*
- \* Using the tools of syntax and figurative language, Joseph Conrad *constructs a foreboding atmosphere* in his novella *Heart of Darkness*.

In community college classes, you will come across a form of thesis that is often called a listing thesis, like this one I found with a quick Google search:

Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches are the best type of sandwich because they are versatile, easy to make, and taste good.

This is a thesis structure that is paired with a formulaic essay structure, often known as the five-paragraph essay (an introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion, where the three body paragraphs align with each of the three items in the list - here that would be a) versatile, b) easy to make, and c) taste good). It is a writing structure for beginning writers that is not appropriate for any competitive four-year college. It is not wrong exactly, no more than learning to ride a bike with training wheels is wrong. We are going to skip the training wheels step because all too often it stymies long-term writing progress. Do not use a thesis statement like this for English II.

The **topic sentence** is similar to a thesis statement, but while a thesis statement offers the central idea of the paper as a whole, the topic sentence expresses the focus for a particular paragraph. It should be the first sentence of each of your body paragraphs. Each topic sentence should provide support for the overall thesis statement. For example, using the example thesis above (the one about Wolsey, not peanut butter and jelly sandwiches), an appropriate topic sentence might be something like:

Wolsey sees Lucifer as a kindred spirit, an allusion that highlights both his pride and his downfall.

Based on this topic sentence, this paragraph can be about only allusions in the text comparing Wolsey and Lucifer. Anything else is off-topic, and goes somewhere else.

Whenever you have a topic sentence that follows a body paragraph, you should start the sentence with an introductory word or phrase that acts as a transition from the previous body paragraph to this one.

Though Wolsey might be as prideful as Lucifer, he realizes that this pride comes from his own foolishness, and shows how he learns something from this setback.

The underlined part of the above sentence acts as the transition, and will allow your paper to move smoothly from one idea to the next. Though you will sometimes see transitional devices placed in concluding sentences, I think you will find that confining them to the beginning of the topic sentence yields better results.

It is common for beginning writers to leave the **concluding sentence** off. Do not make that mistake. The concluding sentence ties all the evidence presented in the paragraph together, and then, hopefully, takes it one step further. Ideally, this sentence will link the evidence and explanation of the paragraph back to the significance part of the thesis statement. It gives you a chance to explain why this part of the argument matters. This is the sentence where you answer the question: “so what?”

In the middle of the paragraph, between the topic sentence and the concluding sentence, goes all the **evidence** and **explanation** necessary to provide support for the topic sentence. In an English class focusing on literary analysis, the bulk of this evidence should take the form of **textual evidence**, direct quotes from the text that are being used to support your argument. Textual evidence should never be left as a sentence all by itself, something we will call a **quote-bomb**.

For example, let’s say a student wants to write about how Joseph Conrad often describes Africans as shapes or objects instead of human beings. And so the student quotes this sentence in this manner:

“Near the same tree two more bundles of acute angles sat with their legs drawn up.”

So that is a quote-bomb, and it is wrong. Do not do it. Ever. What you need to do is select the most important parts of that sentence, edit the unnecessary parts out, and then integrate what is left into your sentence. So what’s the bit we really need? The acute angles line, right? And if we incorporate our argument into it, we can combine both into an effective sentence. Like this:

Conrad’s description of the Africans often dehumanizes them - reducing them to “acute angles” instead of human beings (Conrad 32).

Okay, that is what you need to do for this class. One common pitfall of English II students is the not really integrated comma splice integration sentence. So a comma splice is when you join two independent clauses (a part of a sentence that could stand alone as its own sentence) with just a comma (e.g., I went to the store, I bought eggs.) Often beginning students will integrate their textual evidence by taking their sentence and tacking on a quote-bomb after it and joining the two with just a comma. For example:

Svidrigailov stays relaxed even as he talks about anything, “Svidrigailov himself was exceedingly cool and quiet as he was saying this” (253).

Do you see how the sentence above connects the two parts with just a comma? Neither part is integrated with the other. The quote is just a quote-bomb connected to another sentence with a comma splice. It is wrong. Do not do it. Ever. If you have problems integrating evidence, and I expect many of you will, be sure to ask for help. I will happily work with you to show you how to take the evidence you have selected and properly integrate it into your sentence.

How much **evidence** is needed in any particular body paragraph? As a guideline in this class, each of your paragraphs should have between three and five pieces of textual evidence. Any less tends to be unconvincing and any more tends to be unnecessary. There are, of course, exceptions to this, but they tend to be rare. If you think a paragraph you are writing fits one of those exceptions, ask and we can talk about it. Maybe it does.

Let’s talk about **explanation**. Evidence never speaks for itself. It is never obvious. If it is, it does not need a paper to explain it, so why are you bothering to write about it? So every single piece of evidence you cite in your writing needs to have something that explains how exactly it means what you say it means.



The key problem English II students tend to have is restating rather than explaining the evidence. Note how it is done in the sample just below.

Let's put this all together into an example. Here's the prompt: Explain how a literary device conveys a theme in the opening paragraph of *The Poisonwood Bible*. Here's the answer:

The imagery of the opening paragraph reveals the tension between life and death that permeates the novel. Frogs are "clutched in copulation, secreting their precious eggs onto dripping leaves," which emphasizes life throughout. The frogs are in the midst of reproduction, the act of the creation of life. The eggs, a symbol of life, are precious. The leaves are wet with water, another symbol of life. The same creatures, on the other hand, are "delicate, poisonous frogs war-painted like skeletons." Here the imagery is one entirely of death. The fact that they are delicate emphasizes the fragility of life, while poisonous, war-painted, and skeletons all emphasize their links to death. That both life and death are created in a single image reinforces their close ties to each other. The paragraph closes with an image of a "choir of seedlings arching their necks out of rotted tree stumps." Here the image entirely focuses on how life, the choir of seedlings, grows out of the death of their ancestors, that is, the rotted tree stumps, a symbol of death and decay. By opening the novel with such a clear theme, Kingsolver makes it clear that this theme of the interplay between life and death will serve as the foundation that the work rests on.

Here it is again, annotated:

The imagery of the opening paragraph [what is observed - imagery] reveals the tension between life and death that permeates the novel [the significance of the imagery is that it reveals theme - between the two this is our topic sentence]. Frogs are "clutched in copulation, secreting their precious eggs onto dripping leaves," which emphasizes life throughout [integrated textual evidence w/ a suggestion of explanation]. The frogs are in the midst of reproduction, the act of the creation of life. The eggs, a symbol of life, are precious. The leaves are wet with water, another symbol of life [These last three sentences all explain, specifically, how the first piece of evidence reveals images of life]. The same creatures, on the other hand [this transition signals we are switching gears from life to death], are "delicate, poisonous frogs war-painted like skeletons." [the evidence] Here the imagery is one entirely of death. The fact that they are delicate emphasizes the fragility of life, while poisonous, war-painted, and skeletons all emphasize their links to death [explains how the evidence signals death]. That both life and death are created in a single image reinforces their close ties to each other [explanation relating the first two pieces of evidence together]. The paragraph closes with an image of a "choir of seedlings arching their necks out of rotted tree stumps" [evidence]. Here the image entirely focuses on how life, the choir of seedlings, grows out of the death of their ancestors, that is, the rotted tree stumps, a symbol of death and decay [explanation of that evidence, showing both life and death in one image]. By opening the novel with such a clear theme, Kingsolver makes it clear that this theme of the interplay between life and death will serve as the foundation that the work rests on [concluding sentence that addresses why this matters - it will be a central idea of the novel].

In English II, we will focus on writing solid body paragraphs and turning those into strong pieces of analytical writing. The above should help clarify exactly what I mean when I use particular terms and what I expect you to be able to do. Writing can be deceptively difficult. It will take substantial practice and effort to write something like the paragraph above, but all of you are capable of doing so.

### Rubric for Written Work

We'll be doing in-class essays as our basic writing assignment. We'll be using a nine point rubric that used to be used in Advanced Placement Literature classes.

Here's a brief breakdown of that rubric:

An 8-9 essay responds to the prompt clearly, directly, and fully. This paper approaches the text analytically, supports a coherent thesis with evidence from the text, and explains how the evidence illustrates and reinforces its thesis. The essay employs subtlety in its use of the text and the writer's style is fluent and flexible. It is also free of mechanical and grammatical errors.

A 6-7 essay responds to the assignment clearly and directly but with less development than an 8-9 paper. It demonstrates a good understanding of the text and supports its thesis with appropriate textual evidence. While its approach is analytical, the analysis is less precise than in the 8-9 essay, and its use of the text is competent but not subtle. The writing in this paper is forceful and clear with few if any grammatical and mechanical errors.

A 5 essay addresses the assigned topic intelligently but does not answer it fully and specifically. It is characterized by a good but general grasp of the text using the text to frame an apt response to the prompt. It may employ textual evidence sparingly or offer evidence without attaching it to the thesis. The essay is clear and organized but may be somewhat mechanical. The paper may also be marred by grammatical and mechanical errors.

A 3-4 essay fails in some important way to fulfill the demands of the prompt. It may not address part of the assignment, fail to provide minimal textual support for its thesis, or base its analysis on a misreading of some part of the text. This essay may present one or more incisive insights among others of less value. The writing may be similarly uneven in development with lapses in organization, clarity, grammar, and mechanics.

A 1-2 essay commonly combines two or more serious failures. It may not address the actual assignment; it may indicate a serious misreading of the text; it may not offer textual evidence or may use it in a way that suggests a failure to understand the text; it may be unclear, badly written, or unacceptably brief. The style of this paper is usually marked by egregious errors. Occasionally a paper in this range is smoothly written but devoid of content.

0 Indicates an on-topic response that receives no credit, such as one that merely repeats the prompt, or presents a narrative of a personal experience.

-- Indicates a blank response or one that is completely off topic.

Grading will be as follows:

9	100
8	98
7	95
6	90
5	85
4	78
3	70
2	65
1	55
0	0

Let's break down the rubric language into something more tangible.

The 6-7 essay range is the top end of where I expect you to reliably be able to write if you're shooting for an A in the class. Here's the 6-7 rubric again, with highlights:

A 6-7 essay responds to the assignment clearly and directly but with less development than an 8-9 paper. It demonstrates a good understanding of the text and supports its thesis with appropriate textual evidence. While its approach is analytical, the analysis is less precise than in the 8-9 essay, and its use of the text is competent but not subtle. The writing in this paper is forceful and clear with few if any grammatical and mechanical errors.

Let's break down what you need to do to satisfy each of these parts.

#### responds to the assignment clearly and directly

I'm looking for a thesis statement in your first paragraph that answers the prompt. The reference section above provides more details for how to write a thesis sentence.

#### a good understanding of the text

The writing needs to be accurate and the argument of the thesis needs to be grounded in a reasonable interpretation of the text. In addition, the piece should be long enough to demonstrate your depth of knowledge on the subject. To score in the 6 - 7 range, that means three body paragraphs with sufficient support (see standard below for details on that).

#### supports its thesis with appropriate textual evidence

The textual evidence needs to be relevant to the thesis and be sufficient in quantity or quality (or both) to provide a sufficient basis of support. Aim for no less than two to three specific pieces of evidence for any paragraph level point in your argument.

#### competent but not subtle

The writing style should not get in the way of the argument. Keep sentence structure clear (make the focus of the argument the subject of the sentence, pair it with an active verb if possible and direct object if needed; limit dependent clauses and phrases to what is necessary).

forceful and clear with few if any grammatical and mechanical errors

You can refer to another handout you'll get (titled "Common Errors") but you simply cannot consistently make such errors any more.

On that point, you may receive a grade with a **-1** or **-2**, as in 6-1. A 6-1 grade would reflect that in terms of analysis your essay may be a 6, but because significant grammatical and mechanical errors exist, the essay will count as a 5 for scoring purposes.

A **-1** will be applied to essays where a repetition of simple errors exist (that is, anything you should have learned by third grade such as capitalization of a proper noun, the use of an apostrophe to show possession, or basic punctuation. A **-2** will be applied to papers where significant errors exist to an extent that it sufficiently detracts from whatever analytical strengths may exist in the piece.

If the -1 or -2 would reduce the overall grade to a zero or below (on the 9 point scale), it will be entered as a 40.

Below, I've included the rubric used in previous years as most of it is still helpful.

The grade you receive for your written work should never be a mystery. I've provided a description below of the particular standards I'm looking for. Early in the semester, I may tell you that I will focus my grading on certain areas below (for example, we will focus on body paragraphs over introductions and conclusions at first and that will be reflected in the grading). But by our last paper, I will be looking for a paper that does all of the following:

- 1) An introduction that introduces the topic in such a way as to encourage the interest of the reader, and ends with a thesis statement that contains both an observation and an explanation of that observation's significance. In formal literary analysis, this will take the form of explaining how one or more literary devices produces a particular effect.
- 2) An organizational paragraph structure where each paragraph builds logically off of the one before. The paragraphs should not be able to be easily reordered as that is a hallmark feature of a five-paragraph essay, which you should be moving past.
- 3) Body paragraphs
  - A) that feature clear, analytical topic sentences,
  - B) that are supported with plentiful evidence, the bulk of which is well-selected, well-edited, and well-integrated textual evidence,
  - C) that explain how the evidence supports the topic sentence through supporting commentary,
  - D) that end with a concluding sentence that, more than summarizing the idea, expand the idea, tying it back to the thesis statement,
  - E) and that are unified around the subject matter of the topic sentence.
- 4) A conclusion that restates the thesis without merely parroting it and which broadens out to a larger idea that makes the paper's case for its own significance.
- 5) A mastery of spelling, punctuation, and grammar with no simple errors and few (or none) of any other kind.
- 6) The use of transitional devices to link not only paragraphs but ideas within paragraphs as well.

An A- paper does all of the items above reasonably successfully (or whatever shortened list of the above I give you for an assignment). A mistake here or there, as long as it is an exception to the overall paper, will not necessarily hurt your grade too much.

Grades higher than an A- will offer:

- \* Improved stylistic elements, such as
  - A) Strong word-choice
  - B) Purposeful sentence variety in both length and structure (e.g., simple, compound, etc.)
  - C) Graceful sentence structure through such elements as parallel structure, sentence balance, periodic sentences, and (carefully used) polysyndeton
- \* Insightful, thoughtful, creative, or otherwise powerful argumentation

Grades lower than an A- will suffer show a greater and greater failure to meet the standards above. Of particular note:

- \* Failure to meet minimum page length requirements - the maximum grade possible of a paper will be its fraction of the length requirement, up to a maximum value of one. For example, a paper that is two pages out of a minimum of three will have a fraction of  $\frac{2}{3}$ , and thus a capped grade of 67.
- \* Papers that repeatedly suffer from simple errors (things learned for the first time in elementary school - capitalization of proper nouns, for example) or that show a clear negligence and disregard in proofreading will be penalized severely.
- \* Papers that are found to be guilty of plagiarism, whether using exact words without attribution, using ideas without attribution, or failing to sufficiently alter paraphrased sections, will receive a grade of zero and a referral to the principal.

In general, having a solid, analytical thesis statement and meeting the standards of the body paragraph in three above in a paper free (or nearly so) of simple errors should earn a B or better. Make sure you have a solid thesis and solid body paragraphs, proofread your written work carefully, and it will be hard to make a poor grade. Always ask for help when you need it. Or even when you are not sure if you need it or not.

