**College Essay Rubric – Terms**

| **Strand** | **Term** | **Point Value** | **Definition** | **Example** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Insight | Distinct | 5 | The insight revealed goes being positive and desirable and is ultimately unique to that scholar, making her stand out to the reader. | While Standard Bearer G lacks a sophistication her tenacity, her ability to, despite numerous challenges, find paths forward, to not sacrifice her long term goals for short term needs ("I continually struggle with balancing my family's needs and my own, even though I know that in the end, they are one and the same.... and sometimes, just for a short time, putting my own needs before my family's, I fill the cracks in the road to success made by forces beyond my control. I won't let these circumstances victimize me.") reveal a depth of character, a memorable experience, and ultimately, a deep belief that this scholar will absolutely without a doubt persist through college, despite whatever obstacle she encounters. |
| Insight | Identifiable | 2 | The reader can discern the insight the writer is conveying without much effort. | In Standard Bearer L, the scholar moves from not confidently responding to overt racism ("My stomach turned, knotting in every direction") to having the confidence to do so ("Even in the face of adversity, I am now unwavering in my self-confidence and conviction"). |
| Insight | compelling | 4 | The insight revealed is not only positive but also reveals a trait that the reader would desire to have on her campus. | In Standard Bearer A, the scholar reveals a natural curiosity to learn more about a different culture and the drive to then proactively learn more about that culture, immersing herself in experiences that would deepen her knowledge. |
| Insight | Subtle | 5 | clear but doesn't hit the reader over the head | My word choice allows my insight to be clear without me directly stating it. Reading my work, you know that my insight is x wihtout me saying, "and thus I learned x" |
| Insight | Nuanced | 5 | sophisticated; balanced; understated yet powerful | I see the big picture -- the world beyond myself and my community. I am able to evaluate myself and my experiences without my own personal bias dominating my point of view. |
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| Insight | Unique | 5 | specific to that student, a non-generic trait for a high school student | "my little world and my story are so much bigger than I am because they are something shared, something communal. My world and my story are pieces of the pointillist painting of the human condition: history." http://www.conncoll.edu/admission/apply/essays-that-worked/michelle-b-lee-18/ |
| Insight | Sophisticated | 5 | mature, "wise beyond years," self-aware | "My curiosity to understand the other side of the argument and to see life from a different perspective overpowered my boundaries, for some things cannot be judged without first being experienced. " |
| Insight | Negative | 1 | Negatively phrased and/or messaged |  |
| Insight | Positive | 2 | Positively phrased and/or messaged |  |
| Insight | Characteristics | 2 | defining traits; personality; positive and negative aspects of a person | traits that have to do with my underlying values or other identifying parts of my personality such as: playful, fidgety, honest, adventuresome, devoted, conceited, courageous, charismatic. |
| Story | Compelling | 5 | draws the reader in as they craft a positive and textured picture of the applicant's unique values, perspective -- makes admisions officer say, "I want to meet this applicant...I want him/her on my campus!" | SB F - "I never imagined that taking control of my life would collaborate with the ability to entwine my fingers and assemble a nifty four-in-hand tie...that tie was not going to be my noose, but my rope to freedom from society's expectations about me: fatherless, minority, inner-city...inability to tie my own tie was own personal eslavement and I was determined to release my suffocating freedom from the tangle of thread that was stiched together by a stereotype...I am going full Windsor all the way...that tie is a compass that helps me chart my own course on my Transcendentalist journey of self-reliance" |
| Story | Effectively | 4 | the choices that the author makes in terms of how and when the story unfolds | SB E - imagery, pacing, mix of short and long sentences, artful choices demonstrating routine in atypical situation (opening and closing of refrigerator door, cracking eggs into sizzling pan) without becoming distracting; these choices are mirrored later to show personal development as a leader of self and family and someone stepping into her own identity (I graduated from fixing eggs and canned soup to preparing the traditional Guyanese curries, perfect round roti and steaming pepper pots..." |
| Story | Authentic | 4 | a true, honest representation of self/story/theme | SB E - "Collapsing into bed that night, I stared at the same ceiling that had seemed so menacing only twenty-four hours earlier and felt a sense of accomplishment and surprise. How had I possibly taken on so much so quickly? Every night for the next three weeks, after long days walking in my mother's footsteps, I fell asleep before I could answer my own question"; the story conveys the author's authentic voice by showing emotion and building empathy from the read by sharing emotion (e.g. vulnerability, excitement, fear, success, etc.) |
| Story | Enhance | 5 | strengthens or augments the story | SB F - The story of grappling with adult, coming-of-age topics allows the candidate - with the use of the tie - to really show the change over time and underscore his evolution/change as he learned to tie a tie. |
| Structure and Arc | Structural elements | 1 | pieces of the essay that come together to create an overall framework; devices the author uses to organize his/her writing | characters, theme, plot, composition |
| Structure and Arc | Stylistic organizational structures | 4 | rhetorical choices the author makes to drive the essay forward | extended metaphor, motif, flashbacks |
| Structure and Arc | Purposefuly & effectively | 4 | describes a sequence of sentences, paragraphs or sections that successfully navigates between elements and achieves a balance of those elements (i.e. story and insight, show and tell, etc.) | SB E - begins with story, transitions into insight/growth in a purposeful and effective way |
| Structure and Arc | Seamlessly | 5 | unnoticeable with respect to transitions between theme, language, point of view, etc; describes linguistic and structural mastery | SB F - weaves vignettes and insights throughout, artfully transitioning between them in a way that creates a cohesive message about both the essayist and his context |
| Narrative Techniques | Bookended Theme | 1 | Theme that is present in both the beginning and end of the essay |  |
| Narrative Techniques | Unevenly Balanced | 2 | Use of narrative techniques could be heavily used in one part of the essay but not in another |  |
| Narrative Techniques | Command (Weak, Solid, Sophisticated) | 2 | Understanding and/or mastery of usage |  |
| Narrative Techniques | Intended Audience | 3 | College Admissions Counselor; admissions review committee |  |
| Narrative Techniques | Figurative Language | 1 | The definition of figurative language is when you describe something by comparing it with something else. |  |
| Narrative Techniques | Show v. Tell | 1 | Using description and specific examples of a claim e.g. “persistent” vs. explicitly stating that “I am persistent” |  |
| Narrative Techniques | Hook | 1 | Engagement piece and/or way that the writer hooks the reader into the piece |  |
| Narrative Techniques | Sentence Structure | 1 | Syntax |  |
| Language | Tone (Inappropriate, Appropriate, Authentic) | 1 |  |  |
| Language | Inconsistent | 2 |  |  |
| Language | Precision | 2 | Strategic use of words; best word choice |  |
| Language | Solid Use | 4 |  |  |
| Language | Cliche | 1 | a phrase or opinion that is overused and betrays a lack of original thought. |  |
| Language | Concision | 1 | Economy of language within the essay |  |