

Argument

Element	Strand	Criteria	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Position	Thesis		This is an opinion stated in the first person, and may or may not be a statement directly in response to the prompt.	This is written in the third person, and may just be a topic sentence that restates the prompt. It may only address half the prompt (i.e. theme but no attempt to name craft move, or vice versa; in a two-text prompt, students may only write about one text).	This is written in the third person, and may just be a topic sentence that restates the prompt. It attempts to answer the whole prompt, but may be too unclear to assess defensibility. This statement does not need to be accurate.	5th Grade: If the prompt demands it, the defensible thesis is written as an argument/inference that can be supported with evidence (rather than a restatement of prompt or summary of the text/issue). This statement must answer all parts of a multi-part question. This statement does not need to be accurate.	6th Grade: The defensible claim that the thesis makes represents a broad argument that could be made for all texts or all sides of the issue involved in the prompt (comprehensive). This statement must answer all parts of a multi-part question. This statement does not need to be accurate. <i>Attempt at counterclaim present, if needed.</i>	7th Grade: A focused thesis is one with strong, precise language that clearly conveys strong, precise ideas in response to a prompt. Thesis statements are often not focused when the language is imprecise, thus keeping the ideas at a level that is too broad. This statement must answer all parts of a multi-part question. This statement does not need to be accurate. <i>Counterclaim is focused.</i>	8th Grade: An analytical thesis is a response that incorporates the deepest meaning of the text in response to the prompt OR most meaningful level of an argument. It is the teacher exemplar in terms of language & level of interpretation. It does NOT list assertions. This statement must answer all parts of a multi-part question. This statement does not need to be accurate. <i>Counterclaim is analytical.</i>	A nuanced response shares the relevant complexities or nuances of an argument based on what took place in the text/what comes up in the scope of the argument—it does not overlook or not recognize these complexities for the sake of an answer. Goes beyond the “answering the whole prompt” and thinking about the text and/or author influences in responding to the prompt. This statement must answer all parts of a multi-part question. This statement does not need to be accurate. <i>Counterclaim is nuanced.</i>
	Assertions		Generally body paragraphs contain topic sentences that frame each paragraph. Some topic sentences are related to the topic of the paper.	Most topic sentences are relevant to the topic of the paper.	All topic sentences are directly relevant to the topic of the paper.	Each topic sentence is directly relevant to the thesis statement and some topic sentences are assertions. Sequence of assertions may be random.	Each topic sentence is directly relevant to the thesis and most topic sentences are assertions. Sequence of assertions is attempted.	Each topic sentence is an assertion that supports the thesis statement.	Each assertion provides defensible and relevant support for the larger argument of the thesis statement. Some assertions are clarified in scope.	Each assertion provides defensible and relevant support for the larger argument of the thesis statement. Assertions are mostly clarified in scope.
Ideas	Quality		Ideas show some understanding of the text/content and the task; includes a significant misunderstanding. Significant misunderstanding of task: The response is on-topic, but in the wrong mode (i.e. the prompt asks students to defend use of cell phones in schools & scholar writes a story about cell phones); OR the response demonstrates a significant misunderstanding of a text (i.e. student thought a character lived when he/she actually died - it's like the scholar read a different text).	Some understanding: The response is on-topic and in the right mode but the response is missing an important element like text evidence (i.e. the essay is just interpretation of the text with no support); OR the ideas contain many misunderstandings that impact the argument (the scholar seems to have read the same text, but has very different & inaccurate ideas about it).	Basic/literal understanding: Scholar's ideas are accurate, but do not move beyond summary or "right there" evidence. There may be a few small inaccuracies that do not impact the argument being made and/or one larger inaccuracy (i.e. wrong craft move). The response is on topic and in the right format. If scholars do not answer part of a question (i.e. never address a craft move demanded by the prompt), they should probably land here.	Scholar's ideas are accurate, and there is evidence of inferential/"deeper" thinking present in some (i.e. less than half) of the elements of the essay. There may be some vague, but not inaccurate, language. There may be a few small inaccuracies that do not impact the argument being made. The response is on topic and in the right mode	Scholar's ideas are accurate, and most of the elements of the essay (thesis, assertions, evidence, analysis) are aligned to an inferential/deeper meaning. There may be some vague, but not inaccurate, language. There can be one small inaccuracy that does not impact the argument being made. The response is on topic and in the right mode. <i>Counterclaim is named somewhere in the essay.</i>	Scholar's ideas are accurate, and all elements of the essay are aligned to an inferential/deeper meaning. The language used to describe that deeper meaning is precise and accurate. There can be one small inaccuracy that does not impact the argument being made. The response is on topic and in the right mode. <i>Counterclaim is named somewhere in the essay with an attempt at disproving it.</i>	Scholar's ideas are accurate, and all elements of the essay are aligned to ideas that reflect the deepest meaning of the text OR most meaningful level of the argument. It is the teacher exemplar in terms of depth of thinking. There may be 1-2 small inaccuracies that do not impact the argument. The response is on topic and in the right mode. <i>Accurate refutation of counter-claim.</i>	Scholar's ideas are accurate, and all elements of the essay are aligned to ideas that discuss relevant complexities or nuances of the argument (i.e. discussing text or author influences). There may be 1-2 small inaccuracies that do not impact the argument. The response is on topic and in the right mode. <i>Refutation of counter-claim is logical & dismissed fairly (nothing makes you say "hmmm" or remain unconvinced)</i>
Organization	Structure		Paragraphs are absent yet ideas and information relate to each other.	Groups related ideas and information logically. May provide a concluding statement or section that connects to the topic.	Groups related ideas and information logically. Organizes ideas into separate and distinct body paragraphs. Provides a concluding statement or section that connects to the topic.	Organizes ideas into separate and distinct body paragraphs. Content of paragraphs is generally appropriate. Concluding statement or section links to introduction.	Reasonable essay structure. Content of paragraphs is mostly appropriate. Concluding statement or section links to thesis.	Reasonable essay structure. Body paragraphs include appropriate content in a logical internal structure. Introduction and conclusion are appropriately structured and conclusion supports thesis.	Well-developed essay has logical internal structure, building to become more convincing and complete. Introduction is sophisticated and the conclusion provides closure.	Well-developed essay has logical internal structure to enhance the understanding of the reader, building to become more convincing and complete. Sophisticated introduction draws readers in and insightful conclusion provides closure and eclipses thesis.
	Flow		Uses 1-2 word transitions to link some ideas.	Generally uses 1-2 word transitions to clarify relationships among claims and reasons.	Uses transition words and phrases to clarify relationships among most claims and reasons.	Uses appropriate transitions to clarify the relationships among most claims and evidence chunks.	Uses some appropriate words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationship among claims and evidence chunks. There are some awkward or stilted transitions between ideas.	Uses appropriate words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationship among claims and evidence chunks. Limited awkward or stilted transitions between ideas.	Uses a variety of appropriate words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationship among claims, interpretations, and evidence chunks. Almost no awkward or stilted transitions between ideas.	Uses a variety of appropriate words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationship among claims, interpretations, and evidence chunks. There are no awkward or stilted transitions between ideas.

Language

Element	Strand	Criteria	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Style	Register	Uses mostly an informal tone in writing. Could include slang, symbols, or text speak. Writes in first person.		Attempts to incorporate a formal tone into writing.	Attempts to establish and maintain a formal tone in writing.	Writes primarily in third person; limited use of person pronouns and 1st and 2nd person phrasing	establishes and maintains an appropriate distance with regard to purpose and audience; limited use of contractions.	Almost always writes with 3rd person plural phrasing with an appropriate distance; appropriate verb tense, and clear pronoun use; Limited use of vague pronoun reference; almost no use of colloquialisms and contractions.	Almost always writes with an appropriate distance, with regard to audience and purpose, maintaining consistent style and tone. Almost no vague pronouns.	Consistently writes with an appropriate distance, with regard to audience and purpose, maintaining consistent style and tone.
	Craft	N/A 5th and 6th	N/A 5th and 6th	N/A 5th and 6th	N/A 5th and 6th	Attempts to use rhetorical device (i.e., rhetorical questions, analogies, figurative language, parallel structure) to engage reader.	Attempts to use multiple rhetorical devices to engage reader.	Attempts to use multiple rhetorical devices to engage reader.	Effectively uses multiple rhetorical devices to engage reader.	
Word Choice	Range and Quality	Limited vocabulary; Generally content language is used accurately.	Attempts to use non-prompt academic or sophisticated language show willingness to stretch and grow, yet sometimes go too far and obscure intended meaning. Attempts to incorporate active (e.g., "runs," "chooses," "rejects," not "to be" variations, "to have" variations, or continuous tense ("is running"). However, verbs are not always used accurately or naturally.	Prompt language is used correctly. Attempts to use academic or sophisticated language. Rough use of active verbs. Most active verbs are used appropriately. Generally words convey intended meaning.	Prompt and non-prompt academic and content language is used accurately and precisely. Rough use of active verbs adds a sense of engagement and voice. In most cases, words are "just right" and clearly communicate intended meaning.	Prompt and non-prompt, varied academic and content language is used accurately, precisely, and effectively. Varied use of active verbs gives a sense of individuality and voice.	Prompt and non-prompt, varied academic and content language is used accurately, precisely, and effectively. Varied use of active verbs gives a sense of individuality and voice. Almost all words are necessary and contribute to meaning.	Non-prompt, varied academic and content language is engaging and used powerfully. Varied use of active verbs gives a sense of individuality and voice. Words convey intended meaning in a precise, interesting, and natural way.	Non-prompt, varied academic and content language is engaging and used powerfully. Varied use of active verbs gives a sense of individuality and voice. Connotation of words convey intended meaning and tone in a precise, interesting, and natural way.	
	Fluency	Mostly uses complete sentences. Mostly free of obvious fragments and run-ons.	Mostly uses complete sentences. Simple and compound sentence types are used. Sentences are free of obvious fragments and run-ons.	Almost all sentences complete. Simple and compound sentence types are used. Sentence beginnings vary yet are mostly routine, generic. Sentences are free of obvious fragments and run-ons.	Some sentences are varied in length and structure. Although easy to read aloud, writing may have some choppiness. Sentence beginnings vary, but sometimes they are routine, generic. Sometimes writes in the active voice.	Generally, sentences are varied in length and structure. Although easy to read aloud, writing may have some choppiness. Sentence beginnings vary yet are routine, generic. Uses simple, compound and some complex sentence structures that are clear. Generally writes in the active voice.	Some sentences are rhythmic and flowing. When read aloud sentence structure flows well and moves reader through the piece. Sentence beginnings are varied and generally add interest and energy; four sentence types (simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex) are effective. Mostly writes in the active voice.	Sentences are generally varied and well built (parallel structure, some appositives, gerunds, etc.). They have flow, rhythm, and cadence that invites expressive oral reading. Varied sentence beginnings help strengthen the piece, adding interest and energy; four sentence types (simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex) create appropriate balance and variety. Writes primarily in the active voice.	Sentences are varied and well built. They have flow, rhythm, and cadence that invites expressive oral reading. Varied sentence beginnings help strengthen the piece, adding interest and energy; four sentence types (simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex) create appropriate balance and variety. Writes primarily in the active voice.	
	Concision	N/A 5th	N/A 5th	Writing includes some extraneous expressions (i.e., "this shows," "maybe," "the quote is," etc.).	Writing is generally free of extraneous expressions (i.e., "this shows," "maybe," "the quote is," etc.).	Writing is largely free of extraneous expressions. 1-2 exceptions may exist.	Writing is largely free of extraneous expressions and generally free of unnecessary repetition of ideas.	Writing is free of extraneous expressions and generally free of unnecessary repetition of ideas.	Writing is free of extraneous expressions and generally free of unnecessary repetition of ideas; unnecessary fat is completely trimmed from writing.	

Element	Strand	Criteria	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Conventions		Spelling	Numerous errors in spelling hinder comprehension.	Any spelling errors are still decipherable and do not inhibit overall comprehension, although some sentences may be hard to understand.	Any spelling errors are still decipherable and do not inhibit overall comprehension. Almost all words from prompt and text (names of characters/ places) spelled correctly. Generally, homophones are spelled correctly.	Spelling is mostly correct. Mostly, homophones are spelled correctly. Almost all words from prompt/text are spelled correctly.	Almost all homophones are spelled correctly. All words from prompt/text are spelled correctly.	Spelling is overwhelmingly correct; spelling errors do not hinder comprehension of essay.	Almost no mistakes in spelling. Almost all mistakes are a result of risk taking with above grade-level vocabulary (SAT words).	All words, including above grade-level vocabulary, spelled correctly.
		Grammar	Numerous errors in grammar hinder comprehension.	Almost all capitalization and end punctuation correct. Titles written correctly.	Additionally, almost all commas in compound sentences, commas in a series, and commas after introductory phrases correct.	Additionally, almost all quotations are punctuated correctly and almost all verbs agree.	Additionally, almost all complex sentences are punctuated correctly, and almost all verbs are in a consistent tense.	Additionally, almost all pronouns are used correctly (agreement, case, no vague pronouns), and almost all possessives are written correctly. Generally, complex punctuation (semi-colon/ colon) is used accurately.	Additionally, almost all direct evidence is grammatically and correctly presented (ellipses, brackets). Generally, appositives and gerunds are correctly punctuated. Strong command of grammar allows for clear and effective communication of ideas with minimal disruption.	Strong command of grammar supports and enhances ideas presented.

Process

		Revising								
		Feedback	Drafting							
Publishing	Professionalism	Feedback leads students to some surface level revision. Student shows limited or some improvement towards meeting progress goal.	Feedback leads students to primarily surface level revision. Student generally shows improvement towards meeting progress goal.	Feedback leads students to adequate, but generally surface level revision. Student makes some revisions thoroughly. Student primarily demonstrates mastery of progress goal.	Feedback leads student to substantive revision. Student seeks out additional feedback. Makes almost all revisions thoroughly. Student overwhelmingly demonstrates mastery of progress goal.					
		No previous draft completed or no evidence of a previous writing cycle/revisions/editing.	At least one draft completed and final draft OR evidence of at least one substantial revision (Google Docs) Evidence of attempt to make changes appear for each draft/revision Number of grammatical and spelling errors decreases with each draft/revision	At least two drafts completed and final draft OR evidence of at least two substantial revisions (Google Docs) Evidence of attempt to make changes appear for each draft/revision Number of grammatical and spelling errors decreases with each draft/revision	Multiple drafts completed OR evidence of multiple substantial revisions (Google Docs) Evidence of attempt to make thoughtful changes appear for each draft/revision Number of grammatical and spelling errors decreases with each draft/revision					
	Document	Professionalism	Paper does not follow most of the guidelines of the assignment. All the necessary documents are turned in more than one school day after the deadline.	Paper is complete and follows most of the guidelines of the assignment. All the necessary documents are turned in within one school day after the deadline.	Paper is complete and follows almost all the guidelines of the assignment. All the necessary documents are turned in on time.	Paper is crisp, neat, complete and follows all the guidelines of the assignment. All the necessary documents are turned in as specified and on time or early.				
		MLA Formatting	Attempts at MLA formatting are not consistent and/or primarily lacking.	Generally, attempts to cite evidence using parentheses, quotation marks, and periods. <i>(Meets standard in 5th grade only)</i>	Almost always cites evidence correctly uses parentheses, quotation marks, commas, and periods. <i>When applicable, mostly correct MLA Works Cited Page.</i>	Correctly cites evidence using parentheses, quotation marks, commas, and periods. <i>When applicable, overwhelmingly correct MLA Works Cited Page.</i>				
		Document	Header mostly provides correct information.	Header, title, and text are mostly formatted (MLA) and spaced correctly	Header, title, and text are overwhelmingly properly formatted (MLA) and spaced.	Header, title, and text are properly formatted and spaced. <i>If applicable, visual information is integrated and displayed effectively.</i>				

Almost no = 0-5%; Limited = 5-20%; Some /
sometimes = 20-45%; Generally = 45-65%;
Largely / Primarily = 75%+;
Mostly = 65-85%; Overwhelmingly / almost all = 85%+