

YALE COLLEGE ENGL 114: Grading Rubric

The A Essay makes an interesting, complex—even surprising—argument and is thoroughly well-executed. While an A essay is the result of serious effort, the grade is based on the essay’s content and presentation.

Thesis & Motive	The major claim of the essay is complex, insightful, and unexpected. The thesis responds to a true question, tension or problem. It is stated clearly at the outset and evolves throughout the paper. The introduction has a clear motive that outlines the stakes of the argument and demonstrates a meaningful context for the author’s claims.
Evidence & Analysis	The best available evidence is introduced not only to support but also to challenge and complicate the claims and stakes of the essay. It is often drawn from unexpected places, and its nuances are insightfully explored. The argument is sufficiently complex to require an explanation of how the evidence supports the essay’s claims, and evidence is used to develop new claims.
Structure	Ideas develop over the course of the essay so that the foundations established early on push the argument toward a more complex conclusion. The structure is both logical and suspenseful or engaging.
Style	The writing is clear and concise, yet sophisticated, demonstrating sentence variety and appropriate vocabulary. The essay is a pleasure to read.
Revision	The essay does not simply address the comments of the instructor and peer reviewers, but altogether transforms its ideas or use of evidence from the draft. It is meticulously proofread.

The high B Essay either aims at making an engaging, complex argument but is hindered by a few local problems with structure, analysis, or style, or else it has a simpler argument that is thoroughly well-executed.

Thesis & Motive	Either the major claim is clear, arguable, and complex but misses opportunities for nuance or subtlety, or else it set out to explore an ambitious idea whose complexity leads to minor errors in articulation. The introduction suggests some context or stakes for the argument but does not offer strong motivation, or a convincing motive is gestured at but remains implicit.
Evidence & Analysis	All claims are supported with evidence that is integral to the development of the argument, but in a few places the link between claim and evidence may be unconvincing, unnuanced, or insufficiently explained. The analysis demonstrates several moments of keen insight but also includes arguments that lack subtlety or are insufficiently explained elsewhere in the essay.
Structure	The argument follows a clear logical arc, but small gaps, digressions, or a lack of transitional language interrupt the flow of ideas in a few places.
Style	The writing is mostly clear but may contain a few confusing sentences or mechanical problems. It is mostly engaging.
Revision	The essay has mostly resolved the major concerns of the reviewers, though a few minor issues remain. It has clearly been proofread.

The B Essay addresses the assignment and demonstrates effort to produce a complex argument. However, the essay is hindered by either a lack of nuance in the thesis or by structural, analytical, or stylistic problems in the execution of its ideas.

Thesis & Motive	Either the major claim is clear and arguable but lacks complexity or else sets out to explore an intriguing idea that has not developed into a specific claim. The introduction either unsuccessfully motivates an unexpected claim or weakly and artificially motivates a claim that does not constitute a significant revision of the <i>status quo</i> .
Evidence & Analysis	Most ideas are supported with well-chosen evidence that is sometimes explored in an insightful way, although nuances are often neglected. The evidence is often integral to the development of the argument, although there may be gaps in the explanation of how the evidence supports the essay's claims.
Structure	The argument is interesting and logical, but the structure of the essay is, at times, confusing. The essay's claims, while complex, are executed in a confusing sequence, or they seem related to the thesis but have a confusing relationship to one another. Transitional language may be present but is unsuccessful or inconsistent.
Style	The writing is straightforward, mostly clear, and often engaging, but it contains occasional mechanical problems, confusing sentences, or moments of vagueness.
Revision	The essay attempts to address reviewers concerns but only does so in parts of the essay. The changes in the essay are improvements but may not be global changes. There may be a few lapses in proofreading.

The low B Essay demonstrates an effort to address the assignment, but the argument is ultimately too obvious, undeveloped, or obscured by significant structural, analytical, or stylistic problems.

Thesis & Motive	The major claim is logical and would require some evidence to prove, but the stakes are not as high as they should be. The essay's major claims are somewhat unclear, unspecific or uninteresting. The introduction lacks a clear motive or contains an unspecific or weak motive.
Evidence & Analysis	Evidence is usually relevant, but the essay often does not consider the most important evidence or will present multiple examples to demonstrate the same idea. The essay makes some effort to explore the subtleties of the evidence and may be occasionally insightful, but it rarely uses evidence to complicate the argument and develop new claims.
Structure	The argument mostly makes logical sense, but the structure of the essay is confusing—jumping around, missing transitions, or taking on too many ideas at once. Or, the argument itself may be presented simplistically, leading to a predictable structure and unnecessary transitional language.
Style	Though the writing generally makes sense and there may be moments where the diction is appropriate and elegant, it is weak enough in places to obscure the author's ideas, often as a result of vagueness, verbosity, awkwardness, or a recurrent mechanical problem.
Revision	The essay is either a C paper (or lower) that has been revised to a low B, or it shows no significant revision.

The C Essay has significant problems with argumentation and/or presentation.

Thesis & Motive	The major claim of the essay is weak—vague, simple, or obvious. The essay does not respond to a true question, tension, or problem. The introduction usually has no motive.
Evidence & Analysis	Evidence may be lacking or irrelevant. Instead of using evidence to develop the argument, examples remain undigested and unexplored. The author may simply summarize and simplify evidence, or present it in a confusing or unhelpful way.
Structure	The argument may be too simple and so does not develop over the course of the essay. Or the argument may be incoherent or too broad, without any clear organization or transitions.
Style	The writing is generally confusing, awkward, or too verbose, and probably exhibits numerous mechanical problems. Its diction may be inappropriate.
Revision	The essay did not change significantly from the first draft to the final draft. Either the essay does not adequately address the criticism of peers and instructor, or the author missed opportunities for response.

Not Passing. An essay will not pass if it does not meet the minimum page requirement, does not address the assignment, plagiarizes, or does not meet standards for academic writing or argumentation for English 114.