

Grade Benchmarks: Critical Work

Upper First

Essays at this level are significant interventions in contemporary debate that bring together deep research and conceptual thinking. All sources are acknowledged and documented in accordance with MLA and contain almost no errors of punctuation, grammar and spelling.

98

This uses an advanced engagement with the question to make an outstandingly original and important intervention in contemporary scholarly debates. It shows profound understanding of the material. It draws deeply on existing scholarship but goes far beyond conventional readings and perhaps even beyond the conventional boundaries of the discipline. Its argument is distinctive, highly complex, conceptually rigorous, philosophically sophisticated. It is written with immaculate style and authority, its inventive structure and expression offering rich, elegant and complex support to the argument.

95

This is an inventive engagement with the question and an original and significant intervention in contemporary scholarly debates. It demonstrates exacting and sophisticated understanding throughout. It shows major original insight in its extensive reading in the secondary literature and has a complex and original methodology supporting it. Its argument is philosophically rigorous and highly complex, written with high levels of complexity and authority, and embodied in a subtle and sophisticated structure.

92

This shows a very serious engagement with the question and is an original contribution to existing scholarship and makes a valuable intervention in those debates. It demonstrates precise and subtle understanding throughout. It shows deep insight in its rigorous engagement with research and has a persuasive and complex methodology supporting it. Its argument is philosophically subtle and complex, written and structured with consistent sophistication and authority.

Grade Benchmarks: Critical Work

Middle First

Essays at this level are persuasive contributions to existing debates that build on wide-ranging reading with complex ideas. All sources are acknowledged and documented in accordance with MLA and contain almost no errors of punctuation, grammar and spelling.

88

This essay is an inventive response to the question. It engages in dialogue with existing scholarship and makes an original contribution to those debates. It demonstrates rigorous, precise and subtle understanding throughout. It shows original insight in its broad, independent, innovative and perhaps interdisciplinary research. It is philosophically rich and complex, and written with sophistication, confidence and power, the expression and structure all supporting the argument well.

85

This essay is a sophisticated response to the question. It engages with scholarship to make an original, confident and subtle contribution to the debate. Its shows precision and subtlety in its understanding throughout. Its argument is excellently supported by some thorough and independent research. It shows intellectual rigour and creativity in drawing together disparate materials to make its argument. It is conceptually complex, and the argument is sophisticated, inventive and powerful. The essay is written and structured with complexity, elegance and maturity.

82

This essay is a serious response to the question and is a compelling, confident and original piece of writing. It demonstrates consistent precision and subtlety in its understanding and is intellectually creative in its rigorous engagement with secondary literature. It is conceptually complex, and the argument is sophisticated, inventive and compelling. The essay is written and structured with clarity, elegance and maturity.

Grade Benchmarks: Critical Work

Lower First

These essays fully understand the question and offer well-researched and original, sophisticated and coherent answers. All sources are acknowledged and documented in accordance with MLA and contain almost no errors of punctuation, grammar and spelling.

78

This essay addresses the issues in the question with insight and authority and is a compelling, original piece of writing. It is consistently precise and thoughtful in its analysis and intellectually creative in its deep engagement with secondary literature. It is conceptually subtle and the argument is sophisticated, persuasive, inventive and confident. The essay is written and structured clearly and elegantly.

75

This essay identifies the key issues raised by the question and is a persuasive, original piece of writing. It is precise and thoughtful in its analysis and critically engages with a wide range of well-chosen secondary literature. It critically assesses its key concepts and the argument is sophisticated, coherent, persuasive, and confident. The essay is written and structured clearly and fluently.

72

This essay grasps the key issues raised by the question and is a thoughtful, original piece of writing. It is precise and accurate in its analysis and critically engages with a range of well-chosen secondary literature. It critically assesses its key concepts and the essay is coherent, persuasive and sophisticated. The essay is written and structured lucidly.

Grade Benchmarks: Critical Work

Upper second class

These essays are clear responses to the question that show some secondary reading and an accurate grasp of detail to provide coherent answers. All sources are acknowledged and documented consistently but not in clear accordance with an appropriate bibliographic style. These essays may contain some errors of punctuation, grammar or spelling but they will not substantially impede understanding.

68

This essay substantially grasps some key issues raised by the question and demonstrates some originality in its response. It is detailed and accurate in its analysis and demonstrates critical engagement with a range of secondary literature. It critically assesses the key concepts with which it works and the argument is coherent and persuasive. The essay is written and structured clearly.

65

This essay grasps some pertinent issues raised by the question and offers a distinctive response. It is mostly detailed and accurate in its analysis and engages with secondary literature. It works effectively with some key concepts and the argument is coherent and generally persuasive. The essay is for the most part written and structured clearly.

62

This essay grasps some pertinent issues in the question and offers a clear response. There is some helpful detail in its discussion of its topic and shows some evidence of engaging with secondary literature. It employs some well-chosen concepts and the argument is mainly coherent. The essay may have some lapses in expression and organisation but its style and structure are mainly effective in conveying the argument.

Grade Benchmarks: Critical Work

Lower second class

These essays address some aspects of the question and offer various ideas, though the essay may be let down by poor organisation, expression and some misunderstandings of the material. Sources are acknowledged but the documentation is incorrectly and inconsistently presented. These essays may contain occasional serious errors of punctuation, grammar or spelling that will obstruct the sense, interrupt the flow of the essay, create unhelpful ambiguities, or lead to sentence that are hard to understand and need to be re-read.

58

This essay grasps some pertinent aspects of the question and offers some clear responses to it. Some of the understanding of the material may be superficial, but it will be mostly accurate in its analysis. There will be some evidence of secondary reading though this may be limited. Some key concepts will be repeated but not interrogated. There are some good ideas though they may not amount to a wholly coherent argument. Although the general shape of an argument is visible, this may be weakened by unclear writing or structure.

55

This essay grasps some aspects of the question and offers some responses to it. There will likely be a few misunderstandings of the material that limit the effectiveness of the essay. There will be some evidence of secondary reading though this may be superficial. Key concepts are mentioned but may be partially understood. The essay puts forward some ideas with potential but these may not be organised effectively into a coherent argument. The essay is likely to be marred by weak structure or expression.

52

The essay grasps some aspects of the question but in a rather limited way and the essay has sections which are not germane or are overly broad. There are significant errors and misunderstandings of the material that weaken the essay. There is some evidence of secondary reading but it seems to be superficial and/or irrelevant. Key concepts are mentioned but may be poorly understood. There are a few ideas with potential but they may not work very clearly together and are perhaps obscured by confused structure or expression.

Grade Benchmarks: Critical Work

Third Class

These essays do not effectively grasp the question and there are serious problems of understanding, organisation and expression. Some sources are not acknowledged or, due to incorrect documentation, it is unclear what the source engaged with is. These essays may contain consistent serious errors of punctuation, grammar or spelling that render sections of the essay hard or impossible to understand.

48

This attempt to engage with the question is partial and the essay is limited in persuasiveness as a result. The engagement with the material is has some serious errors and misunderstandings that weaken the essay. There is partial/inconsistent evidence of secondary reading. The argument lacks coherence. The essay may be weakly organised and/or expressed.

45

This essay's attempt to engage with the question is tangential and the essay is inconsistent as a result. There is evidence of very incomplete understanding of the material. There is little evidence of serious secondary reading. The author introduces ideas in the essay but they do not amount to a proper argument. The essay will be poorly organised and/or expressed.

42

This essay's attempt to engage with the question is confused and it lacks coherence as a result. There is only patchy evidence that the material has been understood. There is almost no evidence of serious secondary reading. The author occasionally introduces ideas in the essay but they do not amount to an argument. The essay may have serious problems with organisation and/or expression.

Grade Benchmarks: Critical Work

Condonable Fail 30-39%

These essays have not engaged appropriately with the question or with secondary reading and reveals serious misunderstandings of the material. There is little effort to acknowledge or document sources. These essays may contain repeated and obstructive errors of punctuation, grammar or spelling that render major parts of the essay hard or impossible to understand.

38

This essay's attempt to engage with the question is thin and it is insubstantial and ineffective as a result. There are some very serious misunderstandings of the material. There is no evidence of serious secondary reading. Ideas are introduced intermittently but they are incoherent and unpersuasive. The essay may have damaging problems with organisation and/or expression.

35

This essay's attempt to engage with the question is superficial and the essay is slight and ineffective as a result. There are persistent very serious misunderstandings of the material. There is little or no evidence of relevant secondary reading. The ideas are scattered, haphazard and unpersuasive. Problems with organisation and/or expression will obscure substantial portions of the essay.

32

This essay makes almost no serious attempt to engage with the question and the essay is trivial as a result. The material has been badly misunderstood. There is no evidence of relevant secondary reading. The ideas are weak, haphazard and unconvincing. Problems with organisation and/or expression will obscure much of the essay.

Fail

0-28

This essay has failed to understand the question and has no serious argument. It exposes some significant failures of basic understanding. There is no evidence of engaging with secondary reading. The ideas expressed are almost entirely or entirely without foundation. The essay may have catastrophic problems with organisation and expression. There is little or no evidence of acknowledging sources and these essays may contain pervasive and obstructive errors of punctuation, grammar or spelling that render most of the essay hard or impossible to understand.