

Content Rubric

Literary Interpretation

6 Superior

A **superior paper** commands attention because of its insightful development and mature style. The writing is confident, purposeful, coherent, and clearly focused. Writers present unusually perceptive interpretations of literature and support these interpretations with various kinds of evidence -- quotations, paraphrases, citing/reviewing specific events. Fully developed reasoning and substantial evidence support a clear thesis and go well beyond the immediate response most writers would give. The writer clearly knows the difference between retelling or summarizing and offering relevant concrete details to support a strong interpretation. The writer persuades readers that the interpretation is reasonable and valid. The reader never loses sight of the writer's point, and the interpretation advances logically to an insightful and satisfying conclusion. Characteristics of a 6 paper:

- Addresses the prompt with thoroughness and maturity
- Smooth and seamless organization
- Compelling introduction and thoughtful conclusion
- Sophisticated, precise word choice
- Well-crafted, varied sentences
- Sustained quality throughout

5 Strong

A **strong paper** communicates an interpretative stance with thoughtful, coherent explanation and support. Although writers may not engage readers as skillfully as in a 6 paper, they clearly know how to construct an interpretation. They may work their way into a perceptive interpretation, eventually reaching a clear focus or thesis. Writers do not rely on summary but present adequate concrete details and sound reasoning so that the interpretation seems convincing. Evidence may not be as full or insightful or may lack the unfaltering smoothness of the 6 essay. The essay ends thoughtfully. Characteristics of a 5 paper:

- Addresses the prompt with thoroughness
- Logical organization
- Strong introduction or conclusion
- Effective word choice
- Strong, varied sentences

4 Adequate

An **adequate paper** presents an acceptable response, although it lacks the insightful development or stylistic command of the 5 and 6 essays. Writers may begin unsteadily but eventually will write their way around to a focus or thesis. Although writers support their interpretation with evidence from the selection, they may rely too much on generalization or summary. Or the writer may set up a valid interpretation with some explicit support, but not enough relevant evidence to impress readers. Reasoning may not be as thoughtful or developed as in a 5 or 6 paper. Characteristics of a 4 paper:

- Addresses the prompt
- Organizational plan with some supportive detail
- Introduction and conclusion present
- Appropriate but predictable word choice
- Some sentence variety

3 Minimal

A **minimal paper** addresses the prompt. The writer's tone may seem unconvincing or unsure. While the writing may contain some insights, it may also demonstrate superficial or unclear thinking. Writers may begin by simply identifying the subject without additional information. The thesis may not be easily identifiable, but the writer does attempt to explain the selection. The interpretation may seem obvious, or if it is thoughtful, it is developed inadequately. The writer may summarize the work or narrate rather than offer concrete details. Although the reader can understand the major ideas, irrelevant details, digressions, and/or repetitions may hamper forward movement. Reasons may not be grounded in specific evidence or may be brief or illogical. Often this paper will seem to lack planning. Characteristics of a 3 paper:

- Unfocused or rambling organization
- Introduction or conclusion may be missing or inadequate
- Predictable word choice
- Repetitive or simple sentences

2 Weak

A **weak paper** may be sketchy and brief or fail to develop ideas. The introduction is either brief or unfocused. Writers may identify the subject, but they may not explain the selection or may veer from, contradict, or abandon their interpretation. There may be no clear thesis. Writers may not give reasons to support their ideas. The evidence presented may be vague, irrelevant, illogical, or thinly developed. The writer may indicate little understanding beyond the literal level. Little if any relevant evidence is offered. The writer may seem confused and clearly struggling to present an interpretation. Characteristics of a 2 paper:

- Vague or confusing organization/poor paragraphing
- Simplistic or inappropriate word choice
- Lack of sentence variety

1 Inadequate

An **inadequate paper** suggests severe difficulties in reading and writing conventional English. Writers touch on the prompt but may seem unsure or confused by the task. The writing may be incoherent and is usually very brief (it may be only three or four sentences). Writers fail to present interpretive claims and may merely summarize the subject, usually in a few lines. Writing stays on a literal level. No reasons or evidence may be given. Characteristics of a 1 paper:

- Touches on the prompt
- Lacks organization
- Limited or inappropriate word choice
- No stance or unclear stance

- **Off topic**

An **off-topic paper** does not merely stray from the topic; it has absolutely no connection to the prompt. If the writer mentions key words from the prompt, score the paper.