*Mini-Essay Scoring Guide*

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| Thesis/claim | Complete with a topic, a strong opinion and a clear, debatable so what/why/because  Polished, sophisticated, and uses precise language | Complete with a topic, an opinion, and a so what/why/because, but could be more debatable  So what/why/because could be more fully explored  Contains good ideas but is awkwardly worded  Needs more precise language | Missing one of the parts: topic, opinion, so what/ why/ because  Does not make a clear argument | Does not address the assigned question  Does not include a thesis statement |
| Topic sentences | Specific, distinct and convincing sentences that support the thesis  Focus on an idea rather than character  Clearly express precisely worded contentions- not summary statements or quotations | Sentences support the thesis but arguments could be more convincing  Express contentions- not summary statements of quotation—but could be clearer or more concise | Need to be more specific or distinct  Need to be clearer  May focus on character rather than idea | Do not support the thesis  Some sentences are missing |
| Textual Evidence: Selection | Quotations fully support the argument  Two pieces of textual evidence per body paragraph  Appropriate length--not too long or short  Drawn from various parts of the text and demonstrates a strong understanding of the text | Some textual evidence could be stronger to better support the argument  One piece of textual evidence per body paragraph  Drawn from various parts of the text and demonstrates a general understanding of the text | Does not have enough evidence from the text—one paragraph may be missing evidence  Several quotations do not support the argument  Drawn from a limited part of the text and demonstrates a vague understanding of the text | Textual evidence is missing |
| Textual Evidence: Integration | Concise (specific, brief, and to the point) context (naming who is speaking to whom and when) to introduce each quotation  Smooth transition from context to evidence; makes use of a strong & precise signal phrase  Correct citation format | Some context to introduce the quotation such as speaker and setting, but may need to add more information  Transitions from context to evidence; signal phrase needs to be more precise  Minor citation errors | Inappropriate or irrelevant context—may include too much information and/or may not include the speaker or setting  Awkward or incomplete transition; unclear signal phrase  Incorrect citation format | Missing context or simply lists the source  Lacks transition; signal phrase is missing  Missing citations |
| Analysis | Focused, in-depth analysis to support the thesis; demonstrates a deep understanding of the larger ideas  Clearly and logically explains how the evidence proves the claim  Maintains strong focus on the thesis throughout | Decent analysis to support the thesis, demonstrates some understanding of the broader ideas, but could be more developed  Partially explains how the evidence proves the claim  Focused throughout most of the essay, but may stray at times | Demonstrates some understanding of the larger ideas, but needs more depth  Does not logically explain how the evidence proves the claim  May summarize more than argue | Little or no analysis  Ideas need to be developed |
| Mechanics | Minimal mechanical errors and they do not distract (grammar, spelling, usage, punctuation, etc.) | Few distracting mechanical errors (grammar, spelling, usage, punctuation, etc.) | Several mechanical errors (grammar, spelling, usage, punctuation, etc.) that begin to distract from the meaning | Many mechanical errors (grammar, spelling, usage, punctuation, etc.) that distract from the meaning |