

Introduction

This book represents twenty five years' teaching English/Language Arts in California. Some of you may remember the CAP test? In one sense, this book began way back then, in the eighties. Like you, as we faced new challenges in the classroom, we created materials to supplement published ones. Like you, we cast about for effective ways to address an ever-changing and ever-increasing list of curricular goals. CAP was a "high-stakes test." Scores were published, and schools scrambled to get them up. It was during one such scramble that Sheri came up with the idea of color-mapping; we include a refined version of that idea in section one of this binder. It was also during this time that we came to appreciate the value of a well-constructed scoring guide; those included here have been completely aligned with each standard and with the "official" California State Department of Education (CDE) guides. However, ours have been reorganized and expanded for teaching clarity. During CAP testing we teachers were fortunate in that the CDE produced a series of well-written documents outlining the requirements of each writing style and providing model essays with commentary to illustrate those requirements. We found those helpful and, in the absence of similar materials today, we offer you our own version. Then came CLAS, with its greatly expanded requirements. We observed how helpful the graphic organizers and the group work were to our students. You'll find versions of them here. We are indebted to Spencer Kagan for the suggestion to add the Peer Response Sheets found at the end of each section. Spence offered some much-needed inservice on cooperative learning when his son Carlos was one of our students. In the course of that dialogue, the peer response sheets were born. Today we find ourselves addressing the CST and CAHSEE: high stakes testing once again, but without the "safety net" that those CDE CAP documents provided. We hope that this binder will begin to fill that gap with useful tools for new teachers and veterans alike.

This binder does *not* address writing at the sentence and paragraph levels. The California Writing Projects and a plethora of textbooks do that beautifully. Instead, we offer resources that we ourselves have not been able to find in print: efficient, practical tools to help our students make sense of "the big picture." As teachers, we want to help our students become flexible writers, capable of competent on-demand writing in a number of styles. However, as a long range goal, we also hope to help them grasp the underlying similarities which unite all good prose. We hope to give them the sense of a structure upon which they may build their arguments and find them sound, not merely for a single assignment or high stakes test, but for a lifetime.

In choosing the model essays, particularly the score level 4 models, we have looked for those which step "outside the box," those which require us to see beyond standard form in favor of substance. Robert Atwan in his "Foreword" to *The Best American Essays of 1998* offers this challenge to the high school teacher:

I've grown so accustomed to being asked what makes a good essay that I was taken by surprise recently when someone asked me what I considered a poor essay.

Years ago, when I was instructing college freshmen in the humble craft of writing essays--or "themes," as we called them--I noticed that many students had already been taught how to manufacture the Perfect Theme. It began with an introductory paragraph that contained a "thesis statement" and often cited someone named Webster; it then pursued its expository path through three paragraphs that "developed the main idea" until it finally reached a "concluding" paragraph that diligently summarized all three previous paragraphs. The conclusion usually began, "Thus we see that" If the theme told a personal story, it usually concluded with the narrative cliché, "Suddenly I realized that...." Epiphanies abounded.

What was especially maddening about the typical five-paragraph theme had less to do with its tedious structure than with its implicit message that writing should be the end

product of thought and not the enactment of its process. My students seemed unaware that writing could be an act of discovery, an opportunity to say something they had never before thought of saying. The worst themes were largely the products of premature conclusions, of unearned assurances, of minds made up. As Robert Frost once put it, for many people thinking merely means voting. Why go through the trouble of writing papers on an issue when all that's required is an opinion poll? So perhaps it did make more sense to call these productions themes and not essays, since what was being written had almost no connection with the original sense of "essaying"--trying out ideas and attitudes, writing out of a condition of uncertainty, of not-knowing. "Sleep lingers all our lifetime about our eyes," says Emerson, "as night hovers all day in the boughs of the fir-tree."

The five-paragraph theme was also a charade. It not only paraded relentlessly to its conclusion, it began with its conclusion. It was all about its conclusion. Its structure permitted no change of direction, no reconsideration, no wrestling with ideas. It was--and still is--the perfect vehicle for the sort of reader who likes to ask: "And your point is?"

We ourselves read this essay with some chagrin, having asked the question, "And your point is...." more times than we can count when responding to student work. Further, a casual observer might comment that this binder promulgates the kind of writing Atwan rightly decries. We see it this way: While the most gifted of writers will find "the box" an encumbrance, many others will find it possible to step outside that box only when they possess a firm vision of its dimensions. Then there is the infelicitous truth that some individuals need the box. We are not all gifted with words, but we must all use them to the best effect we can muster when faced with a need to communicate. As long as we teachers expect ourselves to prepare them all, the box will necessary for some.

However, we include Robert Atwan's comments for the simple -- and vast -- reason that, in this era of scoring guides and Standards and on-demand testing, he causes us to think twice. He reminds us that there is a child behind each essay. He challenges us to question, for example, whether the lack of a correctly structured thesis should throw an otherwise brilliant essay into the score 3 level. If the "thesis" is structurally complex and layered throughout an introductory paragraph, then is this not sufficient? We think so.

Thus, we see the box as the point of departure, not the destination. It is then left to each of us to help our students find joy in a journey which *does* permit change, wrestling with ideas, reconsideration, a journey which *is* the enactment of thought.

And we hope these materials will provide *you* with a point of departure.

Sheri Henderson
Flo Ota De Lange

Suggestions For Using These Materials

This book's organization is founded on the philosophical understanding that students have an easier time seeing unfamiliar *substance* if it is presented in a familiar *form*. To this end, each chapter *looks* the same and contains the following:

- a one-page overview of the writing style
- scoring guide
- the prompt from which the model essays were written
- model essays with commentary (for *you*)
- the same model essays in a scoring set (more on that later)
- one or more graphic organizers
- peer response sheet

Students will quickly learn the layout and functions of each page in any given section. We view this as a *good* thing because this familiarity then allows them to focus on the *substance* of the lesson -- the requirements of a new writing style. Over time, familiarity with format also helps students to see connections between and among writing styles. Just as a working knowledge of phonics provides building blocks to reading success, so do these connections between writing styles become a means of "cracking the code."

Systematic presentation of new styles can also help students make the necessary connections. We suggest the following sequence:

1. Introduce and discuss a new writing style with the one-page description page and the scoring guide; to save paper in our classrooms, we duplicate both on a single sheet of paper (front and back) and move freely between them in this initial discussion. You will notice that the descriptive page offers key vocabulary and transitional words. We have added these in response to a research finding that reports that when such words are made available to students, their writing does improve, particularly with regard to transitional devices and fluency.

The most important aspect of the process is the discussion of the scoring guide and its requirements. We spend an entire class period on this step, pulling out all our jokes, stand-up comedy, and teacher tricks to maintain attention. Really. This step is key. We provide goofy examples and challenge students to come up with examples of their own on the spot. We want to give them a firm basis for comparison. What are the differences in each trait between a three and a four? A two and a three? Familiarity with the guides is like giving students a road map for writing, and we want them to have that map *before* they get behind the wheel. Also, once students understand the guides, we can use them for grading. At the end of the process, when the finished essays come to us for grading, we attach one to each essay and highlight sections of each guide that apply. In this way, students get specific feedback on the most commonly repeated traits in a familiar format at little cost in teacher marking time, and we can spend more time on the important comments specific to individual papers. We don't mean to suggest that use of the guides in grading speeds up the process -- it doesn't -- but it does allow us to offer more specific feedback than we may otherwise do in the limited grading time we can give each essay.

2. As teachers we learned the value of scoring as a training device early in our careers, when we attended Advanced Placement seminars, then just catching on. We have since come to appreciate the value of training students on sample essays before they write. To continue the analogy of the road map, scoring a model essay lets them take a practice run. In addition, while many students feel they cannot write a score level 4, most can do better than a score level 1, and many can top a score level 2. The models give them hope.

All chapters in this book have writing samples, and these are repeated twice. First, for the teacher, they are presented in order from score 4 to score 1, with commentary provided for each essay. Sometimes multiple essays are given for a particular score level to illustrate the range of possible responses that still would merit the score. Secondly, the scoring sets offer the same essays in mixed-up order and without commentary to facilitate "blind" scoring. We have used these essays in numerous ways over the years. We once duplicated only one class set of the "scoring set." Students completed the group scoring process but did not mark the essays, and the stack went into the closet at the end of the lesson to await next years' group. However, as students have increasingly come to appreciate the value of a good model -- and a poor one --they have asked to be allowed to keep them or at least to borrow the set for awhile. Therefore, depending on the status of the ongoing "paper and duplicating wars," usually tied to funding, we try to make the models available.

In our classrooms, the process looks like this: Students are asked to form cooperative learning groups. Each student is then provided with one set of the model essays and the scoring guide (some will have already lost theirs from the previous day's discussion.). They are instructed to score the essays *silently*, committing themselves *in writing* to their scores on a separate sheet of paper. We do allow them to use a plus or minus but require them to come to a decision regarding score levels. That is, they may mark 2+ or 3- but not 2/3. We judge the quantity of scoring by the capabilities of the group. Weaker students may find value in scoring one essay at a time with discussion between each one. Others will find such a pace a real snoozer and tell us so. Whatever you may choose to do, the goal is productive discussion, and that does require a reasonable pace, however it is accomplished.

When everyone has a score for the first assigned models, ask them to discuss their scores by group. We sometimes require the group to come to a score consensus. In this case, a spokesperson for each group then reports the score for each essay to the class and defends it -- *from the scoring guide*. This is key. Students must be able to find *words on that paper* that upon which they have based their judgment. They may not just decide a score without analysis. We put it this way: In this exercise, *they* are the teachers. Just as they expect their teachers to justify a poor score on an essay with objective data, so are *they*, as teachers, required to do so.

Alternatively, you may wish to allow each individual to place a "vote" for each essay, placing tick-marks on a grid on the board or overhead. Discussion then centers on disagreements and on objective reasons for the vote. This approach appeals to students who enjoy arguing their points of view, as in honors and some remedial groups. Remember also that disagreement is inevitable; we fully expect that *you* will not agree with all of *our* score assessments, and that is fine! The value of the exercise lies more in process than in product. For the most part, however, we are impressed by the accuracy with which our students do see the models and the excellence of their reasoning. They may not yet be able to produce a score level 4 or even 3 essay, but they *can* articulate what is done well in the models, and this becomes another building block for them as writers. Finally, we try to remember that contiguous scores are of less concern than scores where, say, one hold-out swears that a 3 should receive a 1 due to some fault in mechanics or a single line in the scoring guide. Here is the chance to demonstrate that, while one aspect here or there may be out of range, a holistic score seeks to reward what is done *well* over the *majority* of the essay. (This, of course, requires us to leave our "pet peeves" at the door and do the same in scoring, yes?) The process of group scoring and discussion can be accomplished in one class period but may also require a second depending on the quality of the discussion.

3. At this point, the color-mapping techniques discussed later in this chapter are often useful.

You may choose to present one or more pre-mapped essays, map a sample essay with the class, or, in the best of all worlds, ask students to do so. More on mapping later. Hang on.

4. We give students one to three essay assignments to *plan*, telling them that one or more of these may be assigned for possible completion. These are drawn from issues and material found in recent literature study, possibly asking for comparison or contrast of characters, themes, issues, positions, etc. depending on the writing style. For example, we may ask students to write on a controversial topic but to take it from a particular characters' point of view, a particularly useful assignment for persuasion.

While we are on the subject of prompt writing, you will note that the prompts used throughout this book are vague, barely differentiated from the standards themselves. They stand in stark contrast to the carefully shaped prompts we have been accustomed to offering our students. We do not like them. We consider them quite poor. However, they do mirror the prompts used by the CDE in spring 2001 at grades 4 and 7. Teachers across the state have gone on record stating that the lack of specificity in the prompt was one cause of our students' lackluster scores. We believe that, if prompts like this represent reality for our students, then we should be training those students to face them even as we lobby to get the prompts improved. Thus, when the test changes, we will change our prompts. Until then, we're vaccinating the kids against them. We figure if they can wrest a decent essay from these prompts, just imagine how they'll fly with good prompts.

Students are asked to plan essays frequently in our classes. They know they will not be writing the essay itself every time. We also do our best to give students choices of topics on important assignments. We do hand out graphic organizers and require students to turn in a completed organizer with each completed essay, with this caveat. Some student do not know what they think until they hear themselves say it. For them, planning is moot. They may get "some" useful information from a cluster or brainstorming session, but for the most part, they just have to sit down and start writing. That's okay with us, as long as they go back when finished to complete the graphic organizer. This will help them analyze whether or not all the required elements have been addressed.

5. Once the students have written one or more essays in the style, use the peer-scoring guides on the first drafts. Again, we make use of cooperative groups of 3-5 students. Each essay is given a Peer Response Sheet. This sheet travels around the group with the essay. Students begin with their own essays in hand, and everyone passes to the left (or right). Each student then reads an essay, circles two yes/no answers, fills in one sentence and turns the Peer Response Sheet over, where we have duplicated the scoring guide. Students underline salient sentences on the guide and may, if you wish, assign a score. Then all essays shift left (right) again, and the process is repeated until everyone in the group has read all the essays. In a group of 3-5, some sentences on the Peer Response Sheet will remain blank, since there are more sentences to fill in than there are group members. Spence Kagan reminds us that this is where the students should focus their attention. The areas which remain blank will show possible weaknesses in the essay. In this way, no student has been asked to criticize, an important aspect of cooperative group work. The guides ask for personal responses only. Again, thank you, Spence.
6. Color-mapping is often useful at this point, too. By this time, students are usually ready to color-shade on their own (see next section).
7. Most students are now as ready as they can be at this point in their development to choose their best work, revise, edit, and publish.

8. But what about mechanics and grammar? Don't they count? *Unequivocally, yes!* We believe they are not adequately addressed by *any* scoring guide. Mechanics need to be marked, not scored. In our own classrooms, we address them in the editing stage, and we mark them the old fashioned way: one error at a time. This is not to suggest that we mark every error every time. This is overwhelming to both students and to us. We hold students accountable to some criteria at all times: basic punctuation, spelling, basic usage. Then we add various aspects as we study them throughout the year.

NOTE: If all of this seems like a great deal of trouble to teach a single writing type, it is, *the first time through*. After that, students quickly become familiar with the format, the techniques, and the similarities between the types. The process speeds up, particularly if our method -- or any systematic method -- is repeated from teacher to teacher and grade to grade. Uniformity of methodology simplifies the work for everyone.

Color Mapping

Back in 1984 Sheri devised this practice as a way of making the logic of expository form more visible to her students. At that time, the idea was original, a natural step from her CAP Card posters which some "old hands" may remember. Independent of Sheri's work, others have arrived at their own versions of color mapping, most notably Jane Shaffer. While we respect and admire Jane's work, the format you will find here is Sheri's. This is a necessary distinction, since Jane has assigned other choices of color to some of the same elements, and each makes distinctions that the other does not make.

We start by listing the four most important elements of the writing style on the board or on an overhead, assigning a different color to each.

For example, all essays (proposal, response to literature, expository), require similar elements:

- 1) Main idea
- 2) Several supporting points or reasons
- 3) Example(s) illustrating each point or reason
- 4) Commentary about or explanation of the relationship between the supporting points or reasons, their example(s), and the main idea

We show students the first color transparency. Removing the distraction of words from this 4 essay allows students to focus more clearly on the argument and its balance. Compare the 4 with the 3 and then the 2 and 1 on the following transparencies. The missing or imbalanced elements of the essays are quite clear, even though, *or perhaps because*, there are no words on the page.

Showing the same transparencies a second time, this time placing the color map over the essay itself, can invite discussion of how one writer achieved a balance, how another could improve it, etc. Having first seen the scaffold of the argument, students are better able to focus on each sentence's function in the whole.

Taken one sentence at a time, most students can readily see the difference between a main idea and a reason or supporting idea. They may have a bit more difficulty understanding the difference between example and commentary. Carol Booth Olson of the UCI Writing Project offers the clearest explanation of this difference we have encountered: If you can say with certainty that this is something the author either said directly or intended the reader to understand through narrative (showing) strategies, then it is an example. The commentary then becomes the writer's own attempt to tie examples to meaning or to make draw connections and make the point. Students frequently ask us what they can possibly add by way of commentary without merely repeating the example they have just provided. They are frequently correct. In this case, we tell them to look to their premises or assertions. Are they superficial, predictable, obvious? If a point need only be illustrated to be proven, then the point itself is probably lacking in depth, thought, originality. Good thinking requires elucidation. We tell them that the lack of necessity for commentary in their work is a sign that they need to go back to the drawing board, to keep digging, to think more deeply. And wonder of wonders, sometimes they do!

The color-mapped examples offered in this book are from the Response to Literature style. However, color-mapping lends itself to many, many uses. Students may be asked to color map virtually anything upon which you want them to focus. For example, in narrative form, we ask students to map the writer's use of specific narrative strategies, assigning a different color to several of the following: showing the character in action, allowing the reader to hear the character speak, describing the characters' appearance, revealing the characters' thoughts and feelings, and showing how others react to the character. We ask our own students to hand in their final drafts with at least two different strategies included and mapped.

You may ask your students to take colored pencils, markers, or crayons to map, first a practice essay, later their own. Or you may wish to discuss a single essay as a class, deciding sentence by sentence which colors to map, while one person marks an overhead transparency. However you make use of it, this is a time-tested practice; it works! Every year we see lightbulbs go on during this lesson, and we see writing improve, particularly in kinesthetic and the visual learners. Best of all, it's fun for our students.

NOTE: If you decide to go ahead with color-mapping in your classroom, consider the following:

- Crayons are inexpensive but very difficult to read through. Also, teachers find it difficult to add comments; most pens are defeated by the wax in crayons.
- Colored pencils are moderately expensive initially but last quite a while with reasonable care. An electric pencil sharpener is a must! Even better, get a sharpener for use ONLY with colored leads. They also contain waxes which will eventually "gum" the works, and "regular" pencils do not sharpen well after use with colored ones. Even so, this is the choice of many for one unforeseen reason: students have much more freedom of expression with colored leads. They can shade heavily or lightly, erase, combine colors, outline, etc. Some go through a pencil in a class period; one could scrape the wax off their papers with one's nails. Others shade so delicately and lightly that the color is barely noticeable. Teachers report many interesting differences between their students, and these would be lost if using either of the other methods.
- Felt-tip highlighters are the most expensive and last least well. They offer clear, readable results, but they cannot accommodate shading, erasures, or changes. Be prepared to hand out extra sample essays to counter student "mistakes."

GRADES 9 & 10 WRITING STANDARD 2.2 -- RESPONSE TO LITERATURE

VOCABULARY WORDS TO OWN: text commentary claim premise image suspense flashback characterization conflict metaphor symbolism irony theme purpose focus analogy ambiguity nuance

WHAT IS IT?

- Your purpose is to discuss your understanding of the significant ideas of literary work(s)
- All your ideas should be supported with examples from the literary work and perhaps from life

MAIN FEATURES: A good writer will...

1. Advance a Thesis Based on the Literary Work's Significant Ideas
 - provide just enough background to set the stage for the reader
 - base all claims on ideas, premises or images from the text
2. Support Each Claim
 - offer a rich, thoughtful conversation, possibly discussing:
 - the conflicts the characters face
 - the results of the character's choices
 - the major lessons the characters learn
 - the meaning of any imagery or symbolism
 - offer specific, carefully-chosen examples from the text, from the works of other authors, and/or from real life to illustrate each claim
 - make use of such devices as analogy or comparison and contrast
 - show awareness of the author's literary and/or stylistic devices and the effects they create (suspense, flashback, surprise; characterization; plot structure; use of metaphor, symbolism, irony; theme)
 - show understanding of ambiguities, nuances, complexities within text(s)
 - consistently connect the examples you cite to each claim and to the thesis through explanation of your ideas (commentary)
3. Create a Satisfying Conclusion
 - explain how the ideas discussed contribute to the author's message and to the timelessness or importance of this literary work
 - discuss why real people remember these characters and this work

Use Transition Words To Show:

Time: after, at last eventually, finally

before, after

now, next, then

Cause/Effect:

as a result, because consequently, for, so

so that, therefore

in order to, since

for this reason, thus

Sequence:

now, since, during

before, while, after

in infancy, in childhood

finally, previously

subsequently

Space: above

across, before, behind

here, near, next to

Order of

Importance:

first, last, mainly, most

more, to begin with

Comparison: also

and, similarly, likewise

another, just as, like

Contrast: although

however, in spite of

instead, yet, but

nevertheless, still

on the other hand

REMEMBER TO:

Organize

- read the writing task carefully and cover all its parts
- focus the entire essay on your claims about the work's effects
- include a *creative* introduction, *clear* thesis, *well-supported* body, and *convincing* conclusion
- present ideas in a logical sequence
- smoothly include quotations and citations while maintaining the flow of ideas
- offer a good balance between examples and argument (commentary)

Communicate Clearly

- use precise language, action verbs, appropriate modifiers
- use active voice (*the ball flew*) rather than passive (*the ball was thrown*)
- vary your sentences and use transitions, parallel structures, subordination, etc. to *unify* ideas
- speak appropriately for the intended audience

Display Correctness

- display few, if any, errors in grammar, punctuation, capitalization, indentation and spelling

	4	3	2	1
Thesis	Demonstrates an <i>insightful, perceptive, mature</i> understanding of the significant ideas in literary work(s).	Demonstrates a <i>competent, predictable</i> understanding of the significant ideas in literary work(s).	Demonstrates a <i>limited, simple, literal</i> understanding of the significant ideas in literary work(s).	Demonstrates <i>substantially incomplete</i> understanding of the significant ideas in literary work(s).
Supporting Argument	Offers <i>uncommon depth and substance</i> . Accurately cites <i>specific</i> textual details and examples to support the thesis and each claim. Shows awareness of the author's use of literary and/or stylistic devices and appreciation of the effects created. Clearly understands ambiguities, nuances, and complexities within the text. <i>Insightful</i> commentary connects the above claims / examples to each other and to the thesis.	Argument is <i>complete</i> but <i>lacks the skill, depth, and insight</i> of the score 4 essay and is thus <i>less successful</i> . <i>General</i> textual details and examples support the thesis and claims. Shows <i>some</i> awareness of the author's use of literary / stylistic devices. May comment on some textual ambiguities, nuances, and / or complexities. <i>Commentary is lacking</i> ; connections between claims and examples are often left to the reader to understand. This writer needs to think more deeply about the author's message and purpose.	Does not offer a convincing, textually supported argument. Provides <i>few</i> , if any, specific details and examples to support the thesis and claims. May show a <i>veague</i> awareness of the author's use of literary and/or stylistic devices, but offers little or no understanding of ambiguities, nuances, and complexities within the text. Provides <i>little</i> or no commentary. The reader must guess why the writer has included the examples and how the ideas are related.	The supporting ideas, if offered, are <i>minimal or confusing</i> and may contain errors about the text. The writer may: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • retell or recopy the text • merely list reasons or ideas • offer unrelated ideas • retell personal experience with little connection to the text • argue against the claim or ideas The whole is extremely <i>unclear, rambling, illogical, or disconnected</i> . No commentary is offered.
Organization	Covers <i>all</i> parts of the writing task. Focuses on the thesis and claims throughout. Understands the purpose. Speaks to the topic. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Successfully</i> includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a graceful introduction, well-made thesis, fully supported body, and satisfying conclusion • a logical sequence of ideas • effective balance between examples and the writer's explanation (commentary) • a conclusion which reaches beyond summary 	Covers <i>all</i> parts of the writing task. <i>Mostly</i> understands the purpose. Speaks to the topic. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Successfully</i> includes an introduction, thesis, body, and conclusion, but sections <i>may be out of balance</i>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • important evidence may be missing or may lack needed detail • (or) may give too much detail • (or) may let evidence "speak for itself" without connecting it to the examples, claims and thesis 	Covers <i>only parts</i> of the writing task. May understand the purpose but does <i>not successfully</i> achieve it. Speaks to the topic. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization is <i>unclear or mechanical</i>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thesis may be missing • may seem more like an outline or advance organizer than an essay • if brief, may offer lists without enough detailed support • if long, may ramble on and on, lose focus, and include unimportant points • sequence may be illogical • may lack an ending or end hurriedly 	Covers <i>only one</i> part of the writing task. May understand the purpose but does not understand how to achieve it. May not speak to the topic. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows no understanding of how to create an essay with a clear beginning, middle and end. Ideas are not well organized, or there is too little to organize.
Voice and Style	Skillfully uses mature, precise language, action verbs, sensory details, active voice, appropriate modifiers. Tone is appropriate to the audience and context. Creates a pleasing whole with varied sentences and purposeful transitions, parallel structures, etc.	Uses some precise language, action verbs, sensory details, appropriate modifiers, active voice. Tone is appropriate to the audience and context. Uses fewer transitions, parallel structures, etc. with less effective results than the score 4 essay.	Uses simple sentences and elementary, expected word choice. The tone may be inappropriate to the audience and context. Few or no transitions or stylistic devices are used to connect ideas.	Uses no sentence variety and limited vocabulary. The tone may be inappropriate to the audience and context. Few or no transitions or stylistic devices are used to connect ideas.
Conventions	Contains few or no errors. Errors present do not confuse the reader.	Contains some errors which do not confuse the reader.	Contains several errors which may confuse the reader.	Contains serious errors which confuse the reader.

To the Teacher

We are including a simplified second set for Response to Literature due to the difficulty and rigor of the full standards requirements at the 9/10 grade level. We know there are many students who simply are not ready to understand, much less address, every required element of this style.

However, please be aware that use of the simplified set that follows will **not** address all elements of Writing Standard 2.2 for grades 9/10. Specific omissions include the requirements for:

- student use of such devices as analogy or comparison and contrast
- student awareness of the author's literary and/or stylistic devices and the effects they create (suspense, flashback, surprise; characterization; plot structure; use of metaphor, symbolism, irony; theme)
- student understanding of ambiguities, nuances, and complexities within text(s)

WRITING STANDARD 2.2 -- RESPONSE TO LITERATURE

VOCABULARY WORDS TO OWN: text commentary claim premise image conflict example metaphor simile personification symbol purpose focus audience topic

WHAT IS IT?

- Your purpose is to interpret an author's message through careful reading and insightful commentary.
- All your ideas should be supported with examples from the literary work and perhaps from life.

MAIN FEATURES: A good writer will...

1. Pose Several Insightful Claims About the Author's Message
 - provide just enough background to set the stage for the reader
 - base all claims on ideas, premises or images taken from the text
2. Support Each Claim
 - offer several reasons or ideas to explain each claim, possibly discussing:
 - the conflicts the characters face
 - the results of the character's choices
 - the major lessons the characters learn
 - the meaning of any metaphor, simile, personification, or symbols
 - offer specific, carefully-chosen examples from the text or from real life to illustrate reasons or ideas
 - use quotations, paraphrasing, or summary to show examples
 - explain how these reasons, ideas and examples relate to the message
3. Create a Satisfying Conclusion
 - if necessary, briefly summarize your main ideas about the message
 - explain how the author's message is true (or not) in real life and why
 - discuss how real people can benefit from remembering these characters and this message

Use Transition Words To Show:

Time: later, finally before, after now, next, then

Cause/Effect: because, since so that, in order to for this reason, so

Sequence: now, since, during before, while, after

Space: above, across, before behind, here, near, next to

Order of Importance: first, last, mainly most, more, to begin with

Comparison: also another, just as, like similar, too, and

Contrast: although however, in spite of instead, still, yet, but, on the other hand

REMEMBER TO:

Organize

- read the writing task carefully and cover all its parts
- focus the entire essay on your claims about author's message
- include an introduction, thesis, body, and conclusion
- offer several well-organized paragraphs
- present ideas in a logical sequence
- offer a good balance between examples and commentary

Communicate Clearly

- use lively, confident, interesting vocabulary
- speak appropriately for the intended audience
- use a variety of sentence types and transitions for a smooth whole

Display Correctness

- display few, if any, errors in grammar, punctuation, capitalization, indentation and spelling

	4	3	2	1
Thesis	Poses several <i>insightful</i> claims about the message. The writer's comprehensive understanding displays uncommon <i>depth</i> or <i>maturity</i> .	Poses several <i>clear claims</i> about the message. The writer's understanding is <i>adequate</i> and <i>predictable</i> .	Poses at least one claim about the literary work. The writer's understanding is <i>limited</i> and <i>may lack accuracy</i> .	May pose a claim about the literary work, but the writer's understanding is <i>minimal, confused</i> , and <i>incomplete</i> .
Supporting Ideas	Offers just enough background for the essay to make sense to the reader. Gives several thoughtful ideas or reasons to explain each claim. Supports these ideas with specific, carefully-chosen examples from the text and possibly personal knowledge or experience. The argument is not oversimplified. Provides <i>thoughtful</i> commentary to connect the above ideas, reasons, and examples to each other and to the author's message.	Offers background information. Gives several <i>expected</i> ideas or reasons to explain each claim. Supports with important examples mixed with less important ones. Examples are more <i>general</i> and details are less well-chosen than in the score level 4. Commentary is lacking: connections between examples and claims are too often left to the reader to understand. Overall, this writer needs to think more deeply about the author's message.	Explains at least one claim with <i>literal</i> ideas or reasons. Gives examples from the text; but these may be copied OR may be included without a clear purpose. May offer personal experience without connecting it to the text. Examples given may argue against the claim(s). Does not explain. The reader must guess why the writer has included the examples and how the ideas are related. This writer shows little awareness of the author's message beyond a basic, plot-based understanding.	The supporting ideas, if offered, are very <i>incomplete, unclear</i> , or <i>confusing</i> and may contain errors about the text. The writer may: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • retell or recopy the text • merely list reasons or ideas • offer unrelated ideas • retell personal experience with little connection to the text • argue against the claim or ideas
Organization	Covers all parts of the writing task. Focuses on the main ideas throughout. Understands the purpose. Speaks to the topic. Shows awareness of the audience. Successfully includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a graceful introduction, well-made thesis, fully supported body, and satisfying conclusion • a logical sequence of ideas • effective balance between examples and the writer's explanation (commentary) • a conclusion which reaches beyond summary 	Covers all parts of the writing task. Mostly understands the purpose. Speaks to the topic. Shows awareness of the audience. Successfully includes an introduction, thesis, body, and conclusion, but sections may be out of balance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • important examples and/or events may be missing or need detail • (or) may give too much detail • (or) may let examples "speak for themselves" without connecting them to claims and message 	Covers only <i>parts</i> of the writing task. May understand the purpose but does not successfully achieve it. Speaks to the topic. May not show awareness of the audience. Organization is lax or too mechanical: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thesis may be missing • may seem more like an outline or advance organizer than an essay • if brief, may offer lists or summarize without enough detail • if long, may ramble on and on, lose focus, and include unimportant details • sequence may be illogical • may lack an ending or end hurriedly 	Covers only one part of the writing task. Shows no understanding of the purpose. May not speak to the topic. Shows no awareness of the audience. Shows no understanding of how to create an essay with a clear beginning, middle and end. Ideas are not well organized, or there is too little to organize.
Style	Immediately "hooks" the reader with vivid, descriptive language. Creates a pleasing whole with varied sentences and purposeful transitions.	Uses a variety of sentence types and some transitions but mostly commonplace language. Few surprises or delights for the reader.	Uses little sentence variety and elementary language.	Uses no sentence variety and little descriptive language.
Correctness	Contains few or no errors. Errors present do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the writer's meaning.	Contains some errors which do not confuse the reader.	Contains several errors which may confuse the reader.	Contains serious errors which confuse the reader.

The model essays that follow were completed over the course of a week's time after class discussion of the novel, *A Separate Peace*. Since these were take-home essays, students were able to meet more rigorous standards than might otherwise be expected on a limited timed writing, particularly with regard to conventions.

Prompt

You have just finished reading *A Separate Peace* by John Knowles. Write an essay in which you examine the significance of the title with regard to your understanding of the characters and the overall meaning of the novel. Support your ideas with examples and/or evidence from the text.

Your writing will be evaluated on how well you write an essay that:

- demonstrates a comprehensive grasp of the author's message and insight into the characters and significant ideas presented in the novel;
- is organized around several clear ideas and / or images from the novel;
- demonstrates an awareness of the author's use of stylistic and/or literary devices and the effects they create;
- identifies and assesses the impact of ambiguity, nuance, and complexities within the text; and
- justifies your interpretation by giving accurate examples and citing evidence from the text.

Sample Essays
Grades 9 & 10
Response to Literature With Commentary

Essay Illustrating Score Point 4 -- High Range

A Separate Peace

Throughout John Knowles' *A Separate Peace*, the title holds an important and evident role in the novel's theme. The story centers on the lives of two teenage boys, Gene and Finny, whose complex relationship represents both internal and external conflicts. *The appropriateness of the title is evident in the theme of the novel: Conflicts arising from "something ignorant in the human heart" can separate human beings from themselves and from one another, creating enemies where none exist and harming the innocent.* Knowles explores this theme first by setting this coming of age story against the backdrop of World War II, a shadowy presence at first then becomes menacingly real as the novel progresses. In addition, he reveals the effects of ignorance on the interior lives of both boys, on the friendship between them, and the ultimate resolution these two find.

All conflicts, Knowles believes, whether wars or personal disputes and rivalries, come from two things -- ignorance and misunderstanding. Knowles places the story against a backdrop of World War II, and the movement of the war parallels the action between the boys. The war begins as a distant image in the background, far removed from the "peaceful" Devon school. Everything there seems to go on as usual, peaceful and serene as it has been for generations. Yet the boys know that their "peace" is bought at the price of denial. In 1942 England is feeling the effects of Hitler's war. The young men know that shortly they will be expected to enlist and go to kill for country's cause. This in itself is a conflict for any young man, seeing as how he the young men he kills will be just like *him*: conscripted by the government to go kill young men with whom he has no personal quarrel. In this way, the young men who fight wars must *not* be real to one another; they cannot be. Ignorance of one another is essential to being able to do the job required of them. They must deliberately blind themselves to the fact that each is a human being with a history because they are being asked to cut that history short or be cut short instead. The external conflict of war divides the internal life of the soldier; he cannot afford to feel too much. Knowles shows the destructive nature of this conflict through the character of Leper, who is drawn by images of ski patrols to enlist. There is some irony in Knowles' choice of Leper for this role, since he of all the boys was least likely to make a good soldier. Prior to his enlistment he was the one who could be found avoiding the conflicts of humanity by seeking out the beauty of the natural world: the forest and its animals. When he enlists, he imagines himself skiing through wonderful alpine regions and protecting his country at the same time. He is ignorant of the reality of war, and when his training brings him face to face with it, he suffers a mental breakdown. This offers him a form of escape, but it is one which destroys his interior peace. He returns broken, embittered, angry, an internal state that demands some means of external expression. He finds it in telling everyone what he knows: that Gene caused Finny to fall from the tree branch. Thus, Knowles uses Leper as his tool to provoke a crisis and resolution to the war between

This exemplary essay offers an exceptional analysis of the novel insightfully argued. The thesis (italicized left) offers an unusually mature and complex perspective. The writer forecasts the major points of exploration: war as metaphor and the consequences of ignorance in the lives of the characters. An authoritative style and sophisticated sentence structure immediately announce that this is a writer with something substantial to say.

The body begins with a discussion of Knowles' setting and its function in advancing the meaning. An original and insightful discussion of a soldier's plight is followed by specific textual evidence linking the writer's theme of ignorance of the heart with his use of the minor character Leper to foreshadow the novel's action and move the major conflict to its climax.

Direct comparisons are made between Leper and Finny, but the writer intimates that Finny's role will be to express another, better possibility than the response Leper has made. The ability to articulate the author's purpose in structure, setting, irony, foreshadowing, and characterization with regard to theme set this writer apart from most students. This section offers a complex, accurately drawn, substantial argument.

Gene and Finny. In addition, the harm that is created in Leper's soul as an "innocent victim" of the chaos of Hitler's soul foreshadows the harm that will befall Finny as a consequence of the chaos within Gene. Like Leper, Finny is the least prepared to deal with the realities of war, either internal or external. He meets any darkness he encounters in Gene with denial, and he lacks the discipline necessary to be a good soldier. But the question remains, how will Finny meet the challenge of a reality he can no longer ignore? Leper finds peace in a world that has hurt him by hurting someone else, a common response that has perpetuated acts of war both large and small, internal and external, throughout humankind's history. In Finny, John Knowles presents another possibility -- that of understanding and the healing it can bring.

The dark side of war is mirrored by the darkness within Gene, whose ignorance of the heart and his inability to understand the darkness in his own character result in a major internal conflict. This conflict finds its target in his relationship with Finny. From the very beginning, we can see that Finny's cheerful and charismatic personality captivates Gene. But Finny is a mystery to Gene; some of his actions are either peculiar or too good to be true. Finny is the only person who could wear a pink shirt " ... without some risk of having it torn off his back." He is practically the only person who could " ... get away with anything." Gene is at a loss to know why Finny has this hold over people. "I couldn't help envying him...I felt a stab of disappointment...He had gotten away with everything." Gene does not understand that Finny's power lies in his lack of concern for what others may think of him, including Gene. But Finny's opinion is hugely important to Gene, and this imbalance causes Gene to begin to hate Finny even as he also loves him. Out of this ignorance and jealousy, Gene projects his own motives onto Finny's actions rather than admit that he feels both competitive and inferior by comparison to him. He interprets Finny's natural inclination to find extreme physical challenges and to push the limits of the school's rules as attempts to pull him down. "Then a second realization broke as clearly as dawn ... Finny had deliberately set out to wreck my studies. It was all trickery ... it was all calculated ... it was all enmity." This gross misunderstanding intensifies Gene's conflict as he now perceives a deadly competition between himself and Finny yet fails to confront Finny with this belief. Instead he believes his assumption is real without validation. Unfortunately, Finny has no means to understand Gene's need for acceptance and admiration. Finny projects his own motives onto Gene. Thus, Finny's ignorance of heart lies in seeing Gene as an extension of himself rather than as an individual. This could be seen as a form of innocence on Finny's part, but it is one that has devastating consequences for both of them. Gene's resentment, fueled by ignorance and misunderstanding yet balanced by his strong desire for Finny's approval, leads him to act in ways foreign to his nature. Finny, being Finny, continues to propose risk-taking adventures, and Gene grudgingly meets them. This goes on for some time until Gene is finally forced to confront the truth when he explodes, and Finny responds with candor, "I didn't know you needed to study ... I didn't think you ever did. I thought it just came to you." At this point Gene has the chance to see Finny as he really is. Gene is forced by Finny's honesty to admit that Finny is innocent of all his suspicions. This seems to be some sort of last straw for Gene, and something breaks in him. When they are both on the tree limb, Gene realizes that, " ... there never was and never could have been any rivalry between

The second major point in the body focuses on the internal and external conflict of the two major characters. Specific textual evidence in the form of paraphrasing and direct quotation are offered to illustrate the writer's views of both characters. The argument seamlessly connects original commentary with illustrative example. The discussion of Gene's situation is finely nuanced, insightful, and offers a deep comprehension of the horns of Gene's dilemma ("Out of his own ignorance, Gene projects his own motives onto Finny's actions rather than admit that he feels both competitive and inferior by comparison to him") as well as Finny's role in creating it ("Thus, Finny's ignorance of heart lies in seeing Gene as an extension of himself rather than as an individual. This could be seen as a form of innocence on Finny's part, but it is one that has devastating consequences for both of them.") The latter example shows a rare grasp of the ambiguity of the relationship between the two boys.

The writer's understanding that Gene's failure occurs precisely because he realizes Finny's innocence and his own guilt shows uncommon depth and insight, as does the final sentence comparing Finny to a victim of war, a reference to the previous paragraph's major points and a unifying transition for the essay.

[them]." This is a very important turning point in the novel. Through Gene, John Knowles shows how failure to confront ignorance of the heart can have terrible consequences for others. Gene loses his inner struggle with darkness and jostles the tree limb, causing Finny to fall. In the moment that Gene must face the fact that Finny is the better man internally as well as athletically and socially, he lashes out in pain. In this, as often happens in war, Finny becomes the innocent victim of someone else's rage.

The question then becomes, how will Gene and Finny cope? Externally, the boys are closer than ever before, each carefully avoiding the real questions between them. Finny even goes so far as to deny that World War II actually exists, and this is symbolic of his denial of the war between himself and Gene, too. However, Finny's shattered leg is a symbol of their shattered peace; it cannot be ignored forever. But this darkness is like the war that looms ever closer to them, huge and overwhelming. They don't know how to deal with it. For a while they find comfort in pretending the darkness does not exist. They both know that Finny's accident was no accident at all, but they want it to be kept a secret held between them. But the mock trial, and the "secret" made public by Leper's "testimony," forces them to confront the truth. Trying to flee a reality he does not want to face, Finny slips on the marble steps and once again shatters his leg. And here is where something breaks in Finny, and he finally confronts Gene, "You want to break something else in me! Is that why you're here?" In that moment of pain, he sees Gene's darkness. But the grandeur of Finny is that, when he has overnight to think about it all, he also sees Gene's love. Then, and only then, can he begin to understand Gene's conflict and finally come to some sense of peace -- real peace -- about it. When Gene comes to see him the next day, he makes it possible for Gene to talk openly about what happened on the tree:

"It was some blind impulse you had in the tree there, you didn't know what you were doing. Was that it."

"Yes, yes. That was it. Oh, that was it, but how can you believe that? ... I don't know how to show you, how can I show you, Finny?"

"I believe you. It's okay because I understand and I believe you. You've already shown me and I believe you."

At the end of this scene the comment is made, "You and me, we've made a separate peace." The war between them is over, settled by mutual acknowledgment and comprehension and forgiveness, separate from anything others will say or believe about it. A freak medical anomaly kills Finny, and so this conversation must be Finny's last gift to Gene, who is then left to begin a process of healing that is still continuing fifteen years later, when Gene returns to confront Devon school and his memories. Looking back on his enlistment allows Gene to comment that, "I was ready for the war now that I no longer had any hatred to contribute to it. My fury was gone, dried up at the source, withered and lifeless. Phineas had absorbed it and taken it with him, and I was rid of it forever. I never developed an intense level of hatred for the enemy. Because my war ended before I ever put on a uniform; I was on active duty all my time at school; I killed my enemy there."

Finny is eulogized as a victim of war, and so he is. That the war is internal and not external matters little to John Knowles. His novel illustrates the harm which comes of humankind's insistence upon finding enemies where they do not exist as a means of clearing our

The writer explores the means by which the author brings his imagery together: war as an internal symbolic event with external, real-life consequences; the shattered leg as symbolic of shattered peace; denial.

Then follows a finely wrought explication of Finny's epiphany, consequent understanding and forgiveness, and the effect that this gift will have on Gene's future life.

The essay ends with a reiteration of Knowles' theme of war, one which extends and deepens the discussion of Knowles' meaning rather than merely repeating previous material. The final comments move toward the universal in Knowles' view while still remaining faithful to the scope of the novel.

The final sentence is a simple, elegant summation of Knowles' world view as articulated through the title of his novel, bringing the essay back to the prompt and the discussion full-circle.

hearts of hatred rather than facing our own personal pain. He illustrates the internal and external wars that need not exist if we were to attempt an honest acknowledgment of our feelings. And he offers humankind another option in the form of the peace that Finny's willingness to understand and Gene's willingness to be nakedly honest achieve between them. His view is most clearly expressed through Gene's reflections at the end of the novel: "All of them, all except Phineas, constructed at infinite cost these Maginot Lines against this enemy they thought they saw across the frontier, this enemy who never attacked that way -- if he ever attacked at all; if he was indeed the enemy." Through this novel, John Knowles is saying that the peace of the world depends on the separate peace each individual finds within it.

Essay Illustrating Score Point 4

"Am I My Brother's Keeper?"

One of the functions of literature in human society is to examine the nature of good and evil. The Biblical story of Cain and Abel tells of two brothers, one of whom was favored and one of whom was not favored. In Genesis the comment is made that, "Cain greatly resented this and was crestfallen." In Biblical terms, Cain suffered from the sin of envy. In Shakespearean terms, he was beset by "the green-eyed monster" jealousy. *Through the title A Separate Peace, John Knowles personifies the human drama of conflicting jealousy and love through the struggle of Gene and Finny, in their quest for true friendship and inner peace.* Just as Cain resents Abel to the point of killing him, Gene envies Finny to the point of crippling him for life and inadvertently causing his death. Cain and Abel never made peace or renewed their friendship. The important question in this novel is, do Gene and Finny?

Many events throughout the novel show the reader both the internal and external conflicts between Gene and Finny, Gene and himself. By using Gene's thoughts as an adult and those of his youth, Knowles shows his inner feelings. Even upon old Gene's arrival to Devon, he recalls past fears and places where those fears reached a pinnacle, such as the tree. Already his mind is bringing back memories of his conflict long ago. Every step he takes is one more into the recesses of his mind, where his darkest memories lie dormant. Then Knowles causes them to explode into a flashback, bringing the reader back to the year 1942, and Gene's past.

The first act of this play of Gene's past is one that pertains greatly to the conflict in the story. It is the first example of how Gene reluctantly followed Finny, even in things he greatly feared. Knowles introduces one of the greatest and most powerful symbols in the story, the tree. "The tree was tremendous, an irate, steely black steeple beside the river." Knowles' description of the tree shows how powerful and dominating it was in the Devon of Gene's past. It was a juggernaut, seemingly unconquerable to all but Phineas. Phineas saw it as yet another challenge and adventure for him and Gene to conquer. Yet Gene saw it as another time where he reluctantly forces himself to follow in Finny's footsteps. This is the first moment that the dark "roots" of jealousy dig deeply into Gene's heart. Little does Gene know that this tree is to become the battleground for Gene's upcoming

The introduction offers a sophisticated comparison of envy in literature through the centuries with references to the Bible and to Shakespeare's Othello. An apt analogy is drawn between the Biblical story of Cain and Abel and the story of Gene and Phineas, and the writer forecasts that perhaps the outcome will be different for Knowles' characters. The writer advances a complex and layered thesis (italicized left).

The writer comments on the author's skillful use of flashback to contrast the Gene of today with that of his youth and highlight the change in him. The remainder of the essay follows a clear chronological organization.

A poetic comparison is drawn between the major symbol of the tree and its relationship to the conflict within Gene. The writer then expands this symbol to become a metaphor for Gene's conflict, with the "roots" digging into Gene's soul and skillful use of vocabulary (dominating, juggernaut). A skillful transition lets the reader know that this tree will play a further role in the action ("Little does Gene know...")

struggle.

As the war wages on in a land far from the "safe" boundaries of Devon, there is in fact a separate war going on inside of Devon school. Gene becomes more and more infatuated with Finny, and desires to become like him. He finds many things the Finny does so hard to believe that he once says, "You're too good to be true." He even starts to make himself believe that Finny is sabotaging his studies. Gene searches everywhere for a fault in Finny, and finally his imagination gets the best of him. His feelings towards Finny are battling it out with heavy artillery, with their friendship on the line. As this jealous wanton reaches its peak, Gene loses himself and becomes one with his true feelings. At that moment, Gene jounces the limb, injures Finny, and changes his own life forever.

After the tragedy at the tree recedes and Finny returns to Devon school, everything is different. Finny demands that Gene play sports and begins to train him for the 1945 Olympics. Which is ironic since there is to be no Olympics while the war is on. Yet just as Finny denies the existence of the war so too does he believe in the existence of the Olympics. Yet Finny confesses later that he denied the war because he knew he couldn't join it. His denial is just another sign of how his emotions are failing along with his friendship. In fact Finny denies many things, including Gene's attempt to confess about the tree incident. This constant denial is seen as one of Finny's very few weaknesses. Just as Gene seems to be accepting his true feelings towards Finny, Finny is denying the truth about their friendship. The truth that it is failing like the war, with an end seemingly far away, and peace next to impossible.

Again the tree refuses to die or be uprooted, as Brinker brings it back into play again, with a mock-trial. All Gene's fears return as the short period of peace at the Winter Carnival is thrown away like the Versailles Treaty. Gene is once again back under the spotlight, and once again Finny refuses to believe anything. Yet Leper's testimony uncovers the truth, and Finny is vanquished again as he tries to run from it. Yet this time the truth hits home, and Finny must face what truly happened between them. Gene attempts to bring peace between them, and approaches Finny twice. Once it fails, yet on the second try Gene is able to talk to Finny. It is a short meeting, yet much is accomplished as Finny finally accepts the truth, just as Gene did. Yet just as Cain is protected by God, and lives on unharmed, so too does Gene. As Finny realizes what had happened between himself and Gene, and how ignorant he had been of it, his grief overcomes his will to live, and a simple operation ends his life. Yet Finny is sacrificed to form a new Gene, who rises from the ashes after losing part of himself.

Cain and Abel, Gene and Finny, four individuals playing out the story of humanity's imperfection. War is played on many stages, in many ways, and with many different actors. Sometimes it is real, mortal, country versus country in physical combat for some reason or another. Yet it reaches the unreal and the immortal when it is played out in the hearts of humankind. No paper signed by enemies will solve it, no pamphlets, agreements, or treaties. An olive branch can be broken and burned, but the awakened heart is all that can truly heal, and bring about "A Separate Peace."

The second major point contrasts the "safety" of the Devon environment with Gene's internal/external war. A fine accounting is given for Gene's failure on the tree limb with its life-changing consequences. The whole is accomplished with impressive economy and focus.

The discussion of Finny's denial demonstrates a nuanced grasp of the complex emotional landscape of this novel. The last sentence uses the image of war once again to powerfully convey the helplessness both boys feel to right what has gone wrong between them.

This paragraph returns to the previous references to the tree and Cain and Abel. However, the writer offers the insight that, unlike the Biblical pair, Finny is sacrificed to "form a new Gene, who rises from the ashes after losing part of himself." The analysis of the cause Finny's death is unusual, original thought and is wholly supportable from the text.

The concluding remarks insightfully offer Knowles' message and return to the prompt's reference to the title. This essay is notable for its economy, poetic voice, originality, and insightful grasp of the text. Like the previous essay, the style, vocabulary choice, and sentence structure convey skillful, precise use of language with poetic specificity. The immediate impression is one of authority and maturity. This essay merits its score of 4 for its use of literary analogy, its emphasis on universal theme, and its awareness of the author's use of literary devices as a means of advancing the theme.

Essay Illustrating Score Point 3 Mid-Range

A Separate Peace -- Resentment and Change

In the novel *A Separate Peace* by John Knowles, a man named Gene visits his high school fifteen years after graduating in order to find inner peace. While attending the private boys school during the second world war, Gene's best friend Phineas died, and Gene knows he was partially responsible. Phineas, or Finny as he was sometimes called, was the most popular boy in the school. He was a handsome, taunting, daredevil athlete. Gene, on the other hand, was a lonely intellectual. Somehow the two became good friends. The green-eyed monster of jealousy, unfortunately, bit Gene. Gene just couldn't come to grips with the idea that a person of Finny's stature would want to be his friend. Gene's envy grew to a point where he was willing to severely injure Finny for being too perfect. Unfortunately for Finny, Gene succeeded. Finny's seeming perfection, his strong beliefs, and his ability to forgive trace his development throughout the novel and carry Knowles' message that *to find peace, one must live with forgiveness and understanding*.

Finny's seeming perfection was the basis for Gene's resentment towards him. Gene thought that everything Finny did was perfect which just upset Gene all the more. Finny was so perfect that he didn't care what others thought, like when Finny wore a pink shirt as an emblem after the bombing of central Europe. One time Finny and Gene were at the swimming pool when Finny noticed that a boy named A. Hopkins Parker had the record for 100 yards free style. He remarked, "I have a feeling I can swim faster than A. Hopkins Parker." He was right. Gene was ecstatic that Finny could do such a thing without any training or anything. All Gene could say was, "You're too good to be true," when Finny didn't want his triumph made public. In certain ways he was, and this fact added to Gene's internal conflict and feelings of both friendship and resentment at the same time. Nobody likes to feel inferior, and Finny, without trying to do so, made Gene feel that way.

Throughout the book Gene knows that Finny has some strong beliefs. The first three he noticed were: "Never say you are five foot nine when you are really five feet eight and a half."; "Always say some prayers at night because it might turn out there is a God,;" and "You always win at sports." The latter of the three was amazing because to Finny all you had to do was play to win at a sport. Unfortunately, this all added up to a point where jealousy overcame Gene and caused him to injure Finny. Gene became overwhelmed by sorrow because he had caused his best friend to shatter his leg. The most athletic person in the school could no longer play sports. Gene eventually got up the nerve to go and tell Finny the truth about causing the fall. However when he got to him it was Finny who apologized, saying, "I'm sorry about that, Gene," meaning he regretted even considering for a minute that Gene might have actually jounced the limb. Finny believed that a friend would never do a thing like that. But this didn't help either Gene or Finny, because then they couldn't talk about what really happened, and the ugly secret festered like a sore between them.

Finny's greatest quality was his ability to forgive. At the mock-trial,

The essay begins by orienting the reader to the major character's conflict and offers a brief summary of the novel's central events. The writer presents a thesis (italicized left) and forecasts the three major points. The thesis conveys a clear, competent grasp of Knowles' central point; however, it lacks the depth of thought, breadth of understanding, and complexity which characterize the score 4 essay. This writer will bypass Knowles' layered use of literary device to convey meaning and instead will focus on a more commonplace analysis of the two major characters.

All three supporting paragraphs strongly typify the score 3 response in that they accurately cite sometimes generalized, sometimes specific textual references to support their assertions but lack commentary and overall elaboration. The supporting argument, taken as a whole, is out of balance, with more textual paraphrasing and quotation than elaboration and explication of the writer's point. This problem in the argument stems in part from the lack of depth offered by the thesis; a simple thesis requires little explication. However, like many score 3 essays, this one misses opportunities to elaborate. For example, the reader would like to hear the writer's views on Gene's meaning when he says, "You're too good to be true." However, where it is offered, the commentary displays some insight: ("... this fact added to Gene's internal conflict and feelings of both friendship and resentment at the same time. Nobody likes to feel inferior, and Finny, without trying to do so, made Gene feel that way.") The dual vision -- of Gene's divided emotions and Finny's lack of awareness -- represent a competent grasp of nuanced writing in the novel and ambiguity in the characterization. Similarly, the concluding lines in paragraphs three and four also offer tantalizing glimpses of the writer's vision. Awareness of the author's use of literary devices is limited to

Leper described what he had seen on the day Finny fell. Finny realized what had happened and took off out the door, but then slipped on the marble steps and re-broke his leg. Finny was still upset the first time Gene was able to talk to him through the window at the infirmary, saying, "You want to break something else in me!" But later Gene was able to speak with Finny, face to face, when he was asked to bring some of Finny's clothes to the infirmary. Finny forgave Gene, saying "I believe you. It's okay because I understand and I believe you. You've already shown me and I believe you." Finny's understanding of Gene let them both finally have peace between them, maybe for the first time. Nobody else might understand it, but the two of them had found "a separate peace."

Basically, this complex novel can be summed up in this single struggle: an innocent boy is challenged to understand his best friend in order to find peace. Finny's development can be seen through the novel by tracing his seeming perfection, his strong beliefs, and his ability to forgive. When Phineas died, Gene didn't cry. He felt that he himself had died, and you don't cry at your own funeral. But fifteen years later the peace of Finny's forgiveness and understanding allowed Gene to come back to Devon School in search of a way to understand and find peace with himself. Phineas lives on in Gene, and Gene will be able to forgive. Finny was not perfect; D's on his tests and bad grades show that. But to Gene, the wisdom of Finny's heart was perfect and always would be.

the discussion of character development, but this is another aspect that causes the essay to merit the score of 3. The writer has structured the essay around the device of character development rather than opting for a weaker, sequence-driven organizational structure.

The concluding remarks begin with a repetition of the major points but then go beyond to suggest that the events of the novel will continue to resonate in Gene with healing force. The writer misses the opportunity to expand Knowles' vision to make universal comment, another hallmark of the score three essay. However, the essay is strongly organized, shows logical progression of thought and use of basic transitional devices (but, however, then) to create a smooth flow of ideas. The tone is consistently appropriate, and errors in conventions, where found, do not interfere with the reader's comprehension.

Essay Illustrating Score Point 2 High Range

Three Corresponding Reflections on *A Separate Peace*

The principle in *A Separate Peace* is the constant theme of conflicts within one's friendships. Knowles story takes up through the experiences of two young boys who, even at their young age, were having struggles and trials of immense proportions. These struggles are what the theme of the story is based on. The theme being: *finding a "separate peace" in the surroundings around one's self.*

The title of the novel, *A Separate Peace*, reflects the theme of the story in that Gene finds comfort and completeness when he is around Finny and longs to be a part of him, while Finny feels as if Gene is his closest friend and in the end we find out was considered a part of Phineas. Another way that the title reflects the theme is that Devon is a separate peace from the rest of the world. In the rest of the world, war and fighting is what is on everyone's minds, however, in Devon, the teachers and the atmosphere of learning is what keeps the students at Devon looking for something in life BESIDES war. Finny is especially good at making the students, as well as the teachers, feel better about themselves. The last connection between the title and the theme can be

This essay offers an incomplete thesis statement (italicized) which suggests the author's meaning but fails to provide specific, focused perspective.

This paragraph presents organizational confusion as the writer both forecasts the essay's intent and begins the supporting argument, leading to inevitable repetition later in the essay. However, this writer has attempted a more sophisticated argument than many score level 2 essays will show. The focus on levels of meaning in Knowles' title demonstrates a more comprehensive grasp of literary criticism than most developing

seen in the way the struggles occur between Gene and Finny. There is a constant battle between the way Gene feels about Finny and the truth behind it all. This conflict leads back to the title, and inevitably the theme.

The first reflection to the title would be the completeness between Gene and Finny and how they each find a separate peace. Gene is described as a smart young man who is one of Finny's best friends. It is the friendship which Gene has with Finny which keeps Gene alive and complete. It is that separate peace in Finny which Gene finds which keeps him sane in the world in which he is living. Finny, on the other hand, has no problem with being sane. Rather he has a problem of being tied down to anything. Finny finds his separate peace in Gene's disciplinary character. Without Gene, Finny would be left by himself without anyone compatible to trust and give/share his thoughts with. Throughout their friendship, Gene and Finny find that with more hardships, the stronger their friendship becomes. Hence, by the time Finny dies, Gene has become a part of Finny, something which Gene had wanted so much from the moment he and Finny became friends.

The setting of Devon is another aspect which points to the theme of the story. Because there is a war being fought elsewhere, Devon is seen as a shelter and/or haven of some sort from the rest of the world -- therefore becoming in itself a separate peace (from the rest of the fighting world). Devon is where the youth stay and go along with their lives as teenagers wanting to look forward to something in life. Gene and Finny live at Devon and with every passing day come another step away from the peace they long to have. As soon as the students graduate, they are somewhat forced into fighting for their country. Because of this, some students wish not to leave, or if they do, want to return to that separate peace of Devon. The school is where the students have their last bit of fun and companionship before they are shipped off to kill for their country's wishes. Because of this, the teachers, as well as Finny, try to make the best of it by having as much fun and peace as possible.

The last reflection pointing back to the title would be the struggles between Gene and Finny. The two of them have some bumps and quarrels in their friendship, but after their fighting, they come to terms and find once again in one another a separate and completing peace. When Gene "causes" Finny to fall out of the tree, Finny is wounded for life. What does Finny do? Rather than be bitter about it, Finny tells Gene that HE now must do the sports for Finny because he cannot do them. In this we see that Finny is finding a separate peace in Gene's capabilities. This back and forth fighting and finding happens throughout the story but reaches its pinnacle when Finny dies. When Finny dies, it is as if Gene himself dies. It was in Gene's thoughts, "his own funeral." The struggle is that Finny dies. The finding is that Gene is told by Finny that he has always considered him a part of himself (Finny's self).

In the novel, the friendship between Gene and Finny, the separation at Devon school and the fighting and finding factor all point to the central theme of the story: finding a "separate peace" in the surroundings of one's self. Each of the three points corresponds with the title *A Separate Peace* in its own way. It is because of the three reflections of the theme that John Knowles considered the title of his novel.

writers attempt. In addition, the voice and style, sentence structure, and conventions reflect the qualities usually found in score level 3 essays. The most significant weakness in the essay, given the above cited strengths, resides in the vague premise ("finding a 'separate peace' in the surroundings around one's self") and vague major points. In this paragraph, although the reader can infer a number of good ideas, the writer's intent is not clearly communicated. How are the examples cited related to the separate peace of the title and the paragraph's first sentence? The necessary commentary is absent, and the reader is left to fill in the gaps.

This paragraph successfully relates the setting to the title. However, the writer's argument only works if the reader ignores, as does the writer, that the true function of this "peaceful" setting is to serve as contrast to the external and internal battles raging there. Thus, this second point offers a limited comprehension of the author's purpose in choosing this setting and seems to have missed the complexity inherent in it.

Again, a superficial comprehension of the battle which is the novel's central issue is shown when the writer describes the boys as having "...some bumps and quarrels in their friendship." The writer returns to the image of Finny becoming a part of Gene at the end of the paragraph. Again, the necessary commentary is absent, and the reader is left to fill in the gaps to understand the writer's point.

The conclusion is essentially a repetition of the thesis and the essay's major ideas. With help, this writer could clearly bring this essay into the score 3 range, and the reader would like to reward that effort. However, the essay as it stands has not successfully bridged the gap.

Essay Illustrating Score Point 2 Mid Range

"A Separate Peace"

"A Separate Peace" by John Knowles explores how friendships can provide interior peace to two different people. The central idea of this book is about two boys growing up in school together with adolescent problems and disputes. These two boys are trying to find their place in the world and at the same time are trying to find themselves. *The title, "A Separate Peace", relates to the book's theme because one of the boys, Gene, is struggling to find his inner and exterior peace. He looks to a friend for this peace and yet he is separated from himself, as though he is two people.*

The first way I am going to prove my point is that Gene is so desperate to feel at ease with himself. Gene is a good student, but is poor in sports. His best friend, Finny, is the sports master. Gene wishes that he could be good at sports like Finny, and he begins to create a jealousy towards Finny. Finny has a commanding presence when he is around other people. Gene wishes that he could be the same way. Finny always sees that best in people and cannot see the jealousy that lies within Gene's heart.

Another way I plan to prove my point is that Gene keeps all his emotions to himself. Gene won't tell how he feels about Finny and when he does finally decide to tell him Finny changes his mind. Finny states that if they were to combine they would be the perfect boy. Gene then loses his heart to tell Finny about his jealousy. If Gene were to tell Finny how he felt then the tree incident never would have happened. Gene got that one impulse of Finny and acted on it. If Gene were to learn how to express his feelings he would be more at peace with himself.

Gene is the main character and has the main conflict of the story. Gene has a struggle within himself. He constantly has this inner combat going on inside him. He doesn't know whether to look beyond his inner problems or give in to them and tell Finny his feelings. Gene has a separate peace within himself. He will have peace when he can show his true feelings but until then he is separated between his friendship and his feelings towards his friendship.

Gene is a young man with many internal conflicts. He has a best friend that he doesn't want to hurt but that must know the truth. He doesn't know how to tell his friend about his feelings thus he is torn apart with his emotions. If he were to calm his emotions he could bring together his torn heart and create peace. "You and me we've made a separate peace."

In contrast to the previous essay, this essay's thesis (*italicized*) has an insightful basis. However, the argument does not successfully meet the challenge of supporting it.

Paragraph 2 begins by citing Gene's desperation "to feel at ease with himself." The generalized textual support offers no commentary which would tie the examples to the main idea. Examples center on Gene's jealousy but offer no clues as to the relationship between this jealousy, Gene's dis-ease with himself, and the novel's title.

Paragraph 3 offers two moments of commentary: "If Gene were to tell Finny how he felt then the tree incident would never have happened" and "If Gene were to learn how to express his feelings he would be more at peace with himself." The writer offers some textual support for these assertions through paraphrased plot summary but again fails to tie them to the essay's purpose.

Paragraph 4 includes a restatement of the thesis and of Gene's dilemma. It is a somewhat repetitious section, offering little new information. The statement, "Gene has a separate peace within himself," is contradicted by the next sentence, "Gene will have a separate peace" The notion that Gene is divided from himself is the essay's strongest idea but lacks the clarity, textual support, and extended commentary of a successful argument.

The essay ends with a restatement of the thesis but with no real conclusions reached. The sole quotation in the paper is tacked on to the end without comment or context. The paper is characterized by simplistic sentence structure, commonplace vocabulary, poor style ("The first way I am going to prove my point") The organization is mechanically accomplished with five paragraph form but little comprehension of the function of each paragraph.

Essay Illustrating Score Point 1 High Range

"A Separate Peace"

The theme of "A Separate Peace" tries to tell us that ignorance of the heart may lead to a war between human beings. In the story, Gene, the narrator is having an internal war with himself, but in reality he's having a war with Finny. I think the reason why the title fits the theme is because whenever Gene and Finny are together, they get into more trouble with their friendship. They never told each other how they felt. Their relationship is very confusing. They need to be separated. In the end both achieve a "separate peace," internally and externally.

The theme of this book is ignorance of the heart. I think at that time Gene was too young to know what he was doing. Until later on when they're all grown up, Gene still doesn't know what Finny wants and what he needs. As a friend I think Gene is too selfish. He's also too competitive. In a friendship you need to be able to take but also give. Gene just wants to take everything from Finny. Finny gave Gene his friendship but in return all he gets from Gene is trouble.

When Gene pushed Finny off the tree, it was definitely wrong, but I think he doesn't really know what he was doing. I think there was a blur in front of him at that very moment.

How was he ignorant? Well first of all he doesn't know anything about friendship. Now you can see through Gene's action that he needs to be separated from Finny. And this is how the title relates to the theme.

The strongest element of this essay is its thesis, which is exceptionally clear and competent for a score level 1 essay.

However, the remainder of the essay lacks all sense of organization, offering personal opinion with glancing textual reference and jumping from point to point in disorganized fashion. Some assertions are inaccurate; the writer appears to ignore Finny's death with the statement, "Until later on when they're all grown up, Gene still doesn't know what Finny wants and what he needs." The writer's conclusion that the boys need to be separated is not related to the stated thesis, nor does it accurately reflect the author's meaning. Although the conventions, sentence structure, and vocabulary are stronger than generally found in the score level 1 essay, the weakness of the argument prevails.

Essay Illustrating Score Point 1 Low Range

The story of Gene, and Finny is an example of a war outside of the real war. Also the peace that they are talking about is a peace inside the school of Devon, not the real war (meaning) World War II. The war in the Story "A Separate Peace is also a war of the mind. Firstly the war in the story, is completely aside from the war that was taking place in our country. It is a war that goes on all the time in every place. This war is between, but more than between, it is a war that is inside the mind of Gene. It the peace that they speak of is a peace in the school. It is a peace aside from war because at Devon the war isn't part of their life yet. They live life as though there is no war.

This essay demonstrates a substantially incomplete grasp of the work. It is seriously lacking in textual reference, organizational structure, and comprehension of the required elements of this writing style.

Response to Literature Planner: Jot your major ideas and concepts.

Provide context necessary to orient the reader

Develop a coherent thesis which demonstrates a thoughtful, comprehensive grasp of the significant ideas of the work(s)

Develop three or more claims (supporting ideas) through which you will explore the thesis

Supporting idea 1

What specific details and examples will be used to illustrate this idea?

Commentary: How do the above details and examples support the thesis and illustrate the validity of the main ideas?

Supporting idea 2

What specific details and examples will be used to illustrate this idea?

Commentary: How do the above details and examples support the thesis and illustrate the validity of the main ideas?

Supporting idea 3

What specific details and examples will be used to illustrate this idea?

Commentary: How do the above details and examples support the thesis and illustrate the validity of the main ideas?

Supporting idea 4

What specific details and examples will be used to illustrate this idea?

Commentary: How do the above details and examples support the thesis and illustrate the validity of the main ideas?

What effects has the author created through the use of literary and/or stylistic devices?

What ambiguities, nuances, and/or complexities can be noted in the text(s)?
What is their effect on the reader?

Concluding thoughts about the thesis and main ideas

Peer Response Sheet
Response to Literature

CHECK LIST:

EASY TO FIND? (CIRCLE YES OR NO)

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|
| 1. ENOUGH BACKGROUND TO ORIENT THE READER | YES | NO |
| 2. A CLEARLY DEFINED INTERPRETIVE THESIS | YES | NO |
| 3. SEVERAL IDEAS TO SUPPORT THE THESIS | YES | NO |
| 4. EACH IDEA IS ILLUSTRATED WITH EXAMPLES | YES | NO |
| 5. CLEARLY EXPLAINS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN EACH IDEA AND ITS EXAMPLES | YES | NO |
| 6. DISCUSSES LITERARY AND/OR STYLISTIC DEVICES | YES | NO |
| 5. NOTES AMBIGUITIES, NUANCES, AND COMPLEXITIES | YES | NO |

1. I THINK THE MAIN POINT OF YOUR PAPER IS:

2. YOUR BEST PART IS WHEN YOU SAY:

BECAUSE: -----

3. I KNOW THAT YOU CARE ABOUT:

4. I WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT:

5. I AM CONFUSED ABOUT:

