**MOORPARK COLLEGE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT**

**GRADING CRITERIA for Literary Analysis Essays**

These criteria apply to typical papers in English composition and literature courses. These standards do not consider a student's effort or ability; they apply only to the finished paper itself. A grade of C is considered adequate or satisfactory. Grades of A and B represent significantly higher performances, while D and F are not passing grades. The instructor may consider the context of the paper (type/level of the course, point in the semester, in-class preparation, focus of the assignment) in assigning a grade.

**The A paper** is an outstanding performance; it may exceed the expectations of the assignment. It is thought-provoking and well crafted. It demonstrates excellence on all levels.

THESIS: clear, specific, original, significant, insightful. Advances an interpretation of the literary work’s themes or other literary elements.

ORGANIZATION: logical, creative organization growing naturally from thesis and content; paragraphs linked to thesis and to each other using fluid transitions. Strong introduction and conclusion. Organized topically instead of being plot summary. Material from primary and, if applicable, secondary, sources is thoroughly and creatively integrated into student’s argument.

DEVELOPMENT: paragraphs thoroughly developed and linked by unobtrusive, organic transitions; graceful use of varied rhetorical strategies; clear contextualization; rich variety of convincing reasons, explanations, examples, illustrations; concrete, powerful details.

INFORMATION LITERACY: primary and, if applicable, secondary source material is of the highest quality and is sufficient in amount; thorough and creative use of varied source material. Quotations, summary, and paraphrases are deftly analyzed or interpreted.

LANGUAGE: grace and economy of expression; conscious choice of language; vivid, precise, original word choice.

TONE/VOICE: authoritative, genuine authorial voice; awareness of audience.

SENTENCES: rich variety and complexity of sentence structure. Free of basic errors such as fragments, run-ons, and subject/verb agreement. Literary present tense consistently used.

MECHANICS: mastery of conventions of edited standard English.

MLA: quotations correctly introduced, punctuated, and formatted (e.g., long quotations are blocked, poetic line breaks are indicated with slashes, etc.). Parenthetical citations used correctly. Works Cited page follows MLA guidelines; very minor, if any, formatting errors. Most recent MLA guidelines are followed.

**The B paper** is a good, better-than-average performance. It meets the expectations of the assignment. It is interesting and clearly written. It demonstrates competency on all levels.

THESIS: clear and purposeful. Identifies an interpretation of primary source’s themes or other literary elements.

ORGANIZATION: logical organization; well-developed introduction and conclusion; paragraphs linked to thesis and to each other using effective transitions. Material from primary and, if applicable, secondary sources is integrated into student’s own argument.

DEVELOPMENT: rhetorical strategies used as necessary; coherent paragraphs, fully developed with supporting reasons, explanations, examples, illustrations, context; generalizations supported with relevant, specific details. Is not merely a plot summary.

INFORMATION LITERACY: primary and, if applicable, secondary source material is of good quality and amount; appropriately varied and thorough source material; quotations, summary, and paraphrases are analyzed or interpreted.

LANGUAGE: concise sentences; accurate and effective word choice.

TONE/VOICE: engaging authorial voice; some awareness of audience.

SENTENCES: some variety and complexity of sentence structure; mostly free of basic

errors such as fragments, run-ons, subject/verb agreement. Literary present tense used for the most part.

MECHANICS: observes conventions of standard written English.

MLA: quotations are correctly introduced, punctuated, and formatted in most instances. Parenthetical citations and Works Cited page are mostly correct. Minor formatting errors do not deter from comprehensibility of citations; all significant information included. Most recent MLA guidelines are followed.

**The C paper** represents adequate, readable college-level writing that generally responds to the assignment.

THESIS: controlling idea may be overly general or not closely linked to content of essay. Relates to themes or literary elements of primary work. Is not sufficiently analytical or interpretative.

ORGANIZATION: some evidence of organization or rhetorical framework; clear beginning, middle, and end. Material from primary and, if applicable, secondary sources relates to student’s argument but is not smoothly integrated.

DEVELOPMENT: uses paragraphs and topic sentences; gives supporting reasons and examples, but may not be sufficiently contextualized, logically reasoned, or fully developed. Relies on plot summary rather than analysis of literary elements or themes.

INFORMATION LITERACY: primary and, if applicable, secondary source material is of acceptable quality and amount; sources may not be the most relevant; quotations, summary, and paraphrases are commented upon simplistically.

LANGUAGE: clear writing, mostly accurate word choice.

TONE/VOICE: inconsistent authorial voice; basic awareness of audience.

SENTENCES: complete, mostly correct sentences; may contain occasional grammatical or syntactical errors. Inconsistent use of literary present tense.

MECHANICS: free of distracting errors of spelling and punctuation.

MLA: some errors in quotation formatting (dropped quotations, failure to block long quotes, punctuation errors). Some content and formatting errors exist in parenthetical references and Works Cited page. Parenthetical references may not coordinate well with Works Cited entries. Most recent MLA guidelines are used primarily, though some inconsistency may occur.

**The D paper** is confusing, difficult to read, unfocused. It does not demonstrate competent college-level writing. It may fail to address all parts of the assignment.

THESIS: unclear or vague, poorly linked to content of essay. Not analytical or interpretative.

ORGANIZATION: poorly structured or disordered. Paragraphs arbitrarily or illogically ordered. Material from primary and, if applicable, secondary sources is irrelevant, awkwardly placed, or not coherently integrated into paper.

DEVELOPMENT: underdeveloped; paragraphs overly long or short; lack of support for ideas; lack of concrete detail; irrelevancies, redundancies, oversimplifications, filler. Incoherent or not unified. Abundant plot summary with errors and omissions. May not meet length requirement.

INFORMATION LITERACY: insufficient number of sources or amount of source material used. Secondary sources, if required, are inappropriate for college-level research (dubious web page quality, lack of use of Library sources, insufficient number of sources, irrelevant sources). Some source material is plagiarized (quotations marks not used, insufficient paraphrases, summaries of others’ ideas not attributed to sources). Source material does not adequately support student’s argument; source material is not sufficiently reflected upon or interpreted.

LANGUAGE: unclear or incoherent writing.

TONE/VOICE: little awareness of audience.

SENTENCES: wordy, confusing, or incomplete sentences; frequent grammatical or syntactical errors. Lack of literary present tense.

MECHANICS: distracting mechanical errors.

MLA: frequent, significant errors in quotation formatting. Parenthetical citations are frequently absent or inaccurate; many errors or omissions in content and formatting of Works Cited entries. Outdated MLA format may be used.

**The F paper** is weak in several areas. It fails to communicate its ideas effectively. It may not address the assigned question. It may be late without instructor approval. Plagiarized papers merit an automatic F.

THESIS: lacks a thesis or controlling idea; does not address assigned topic.

ORGANIZATION: lack of organizing principle; lacks clear beginning, middle, and end; lacks clear paragraphing; lacks clear transitions. Source material is irrelevant and illogically placed.

DEVELOPMENT: severely underdeveloped; seriously and consistently illogical and/or predicated on false premises; absence of concrete detail. Very serious omissions and errors.

INFORMATION LITERACY: insufficient amount and use of primary and secondary source material; obviously inappropriate sources used. Much source material is plagiarized (quotations marks not used, insufficient paraphrases, summaries of others’ ideas not attributed to sources, essay has been written by someone other than the student who claims authorship). Source material is irrelevant or contradicts student’s argument; source material is not reflected upon.

LANGUAGE: obscure, vague writing; inaccurate word choice.

TONE/VOICE: little or no awareness of audience.

SENTENCES: numerous grammatical or syntactical errors.

MECHANICS: numerous distracting mechanical errors.

MLA: severe deficiencies in quotation formatting, parenthetical citations, and Works Cited entries; lack of parenthetical citations; missing Works Cited list. Outdated MLA format may be used.