

Analytical Essay Rubric

Grades English I-IV

Key Analytical Elements: Interpretive thesis · Textual evidence with commentary · Analysis (not summary) · Metalanguage

Score Point	Organization / Structure	Development & Support	Critical Thinking	Language & Conventions
Score Point 4 – Accomplished	Essay opens with a clear, arguable thesis that identifies the interpretive claim the analysis will support. Organizational structure is purposefully aligned to the analytical task. Transitions show the logical development of the interpretation. Conclusion offers synthesis or insight that extends beyond the introduction.	Analytical claim is thoroughly and specifically developed. Evidence is well chosen, accurately represented, and fully integrated – not dropped in without context. Commentary goes well beyond paraphrase; writer explains how and why evidence supports the interpretive claim. Writer sustains analytical thinking throughout, avoiding summary in favor of examination.	Outstanding analytical thinking. Writer moves well beyond obvious or surface-level interpretations to offer an insightful, original reading. Analysis is nuanced, accounts for complexity or ambiguity in the subject, and demonstrates thorough understanding of both the subject and the analytical task.	Word choice is precise and analytically purposeful. Writer uses appropriate metalanguage (literary, rhetorical, or conceptual terminology) accurately and effectively. Sentences are varied and well controlled. Consistent command of conventions with only minor, non-distracting errors.
Score Point 3 – Proficient	Essay presents a clear analytical thesis and organizes evidence in logical support of it. Paragraphs are focused and generally unified. Transitions are mostly effective. Minor lapses in coherence may appear but do not obscure the analytical argument. Conclusion addresses the thesis.	Interpretive claim is supported with relevant, accurate evidence that is generally well explained. Commentary is present and analytical, though it may occasionally be incomplete or somewhat predictable. Writer mostly avoids pure summary, linking evidence to the interpretive claim.	Solid analytical thinking that goes beyond the literal or obvious. Interpretation is thoughtful and supported, though it may not fully account for complexity or may be uneven in depth across the essay.	Word choice is generally clear and appropriate to an analytical purpose. Metalanguage, if used, is mostly accurate. Sentences show adequate variety and control. Adequate command of conventions with errors that do not significantly affect fluency or meaning.
Score Point 2 – Developing	Thesis is present but may be underdeveloped, overly broad, or not genuinely interpretive (e.g., a statement of fact rather than an analytical claim). Organizational structure is recognizable but inconsistent. Paragraphs may lack clear focus or drift toward summary. Transitions are weak or formulaic. Conclusion may only restate the introduction.	Some evidence is provided, but commentary is minimal, thin, or primarily summary. Writer may drop in evidence without adequate explanation of how it supports the interpretive claim. Connections between evidence and thesis are often underdeveloped or implied rather than stated.	Limited analytical depth. Interpretation is surface-level, formulaic, or largely descriptive. Writer shows only partial understanding of the analytical task, often defaulting to plot summary, factual description, or simple observation.	Word choice is general and at times imprecise. Metalanguage may be absent, inaccurate, or used superficially. Sentences show limited variety. Errors in conventions appear throughout but do not completely obscure meaning.
Score Point 1 – Beginning	Essay lacks a clear analytical thesis or any identifiable organizational logic. Ideas are presented randomly or repetitively. Introduction and/or conclusion may be absent. Reader cannot clearly identify an interpretive argument.	Development is minimal or absent. Essay is primarily or entirely summary, or evidence is scarce, irrelevant, or completely unexplained. No meaningful attempt to support an interpretive claim with analytical reasoning.	Analytical thinking is absent or severely limited. Writer does not demonstrate understanding of the analytical task, producing description, summary, or assertion in place of analysis.	Word choice is vague, limited, or inappropriate to an analytical purpose. Sentences are awkward or uncontrolled. Persistent errors in conventions disrupt fluency and may interfere with meaning.

Vertical Differentiation Note: The criteria above remain constant across English I-IV. Grade-level calibration lives in the task and text complexity – not the rubric. A Score Point 4 in English I reflects grade-appropriate mastery; a Score Point 4 in English IV reflects the heightened analytical, evaluative, and rhetorical demands of TEKS E4. Score holistically: determine which score point best describes the overall performance, then confirm against individual dimensions.