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| **Excellent 26-30 points** | | | **Satisfactory 22-25 pts** | | **Needs Improvement below 21 pts** |
| **C**  **O**  **N**  **T**  **E**  **N**  **T**  **A**  **N**  **D**  **O**  **R**  **G**  **A**  **N**  **I**  **Z**  **A**  **T**  **I**  **O**  **N**  **70%**  **21 pts** | **Response to topic/Thesis (3 pts)** | Makes a strong, insightful assertion (i.e., thesis) that addresses the topic clearly and moves beyond the predictable; takes a risk and explores issues thoughtfully and in depth | | Demonstrates some insight into the topic, but the assertion is predictable or unimaginative | Suggests confusion about the topic, neglects important aspects of the problem or thesis; lacks focus or demonstrates confused or simplistic thinking |
| **Supporting Detail (3 pts)** | Uses significant, rich detail that proves thesis; essay contains at least 3 significant main ideas that support thesis | Uses some details or examples, but could be extended to show more understanding and/or support | | Lacks concrete, relevant details or quotes that prove/support thesis; provides simplistic generalization; unclear |
| **Commentary/**  **Analysis (3 pts)** | Original commentary analyzes and interprets details, quotes, and examples, showing how they relate to the thesis | Explains significance of details, but analysis could be expanded to show stronger connection to thesis or provide more insight about the details | | Commentary is lacking or is predictable and disconnected, summarizing instead of analyzing significance; shows unclear connection of details to thesis |
| **Use of quotes (3 pts)** | \*Uses quotations that clearly support the thesis  \*Introduces quotations correctly by setting the context and mentioning the speaker  \*Clearly explains significance of quotes | \*Uses enough quotes & citations to make a point  \*Commentary on quotes addresses issue, but could be pushed further | | \*Uses few quotes or supporting citations OR quotes do not support topic  \*Quotes need more commentary  \*Fails to introduce quotes; formats quotes incorrectly |
| **Organization (3 pts)** | \*Has clear, sophisticated organization; body paragraphs relate back to thesis  \*Paragraph parts flow seamlessly | \*Has adequate organization  \*Paragraphs have all key parts | | \*Weak organization makes argument or explanation hard to follow; body paragraphs need clearer relation to thesis;  \*Paragraphs are missing key parts |
| **Transitions ( 3 pts)** | Uses thoughtful transitions among all ideas at the essay and paragraph levels for a smooth progression of ideas | Uses transitions between and within paragraphs, but they may seem awkward or forced | | Has inconsistent transitions at either the paragraph or essay level |
| **Introduction/**  **Conclusion (3 pts)** | \*Has an introduction that grabs reader’s attention  \*Has a conclusion that provokes further thought | \*Has introduction, but it may not draw in reader;  \*Has a conclusion, but it may not tie up loose ends | | Introduction and/or conclusion is simplistic and could be more engaging and/or clearer OR lacks an introduction and/or conclusion |
| **S**  **T**  **Y**  **L**  **E**  **30%**  **9 pts.** | **Command of Language (Voice)**  **( 3 pts)** | Language is natural or appropriate to the tone and captures the writer’s “voice” | Language is adequate, but doesn’t reinforce tone or reflect unique voice | | Language is formulaic and contains use of passive voice and inappropriate voice (possibly uses too much 2nd person “you” ) |
| **Word Choice (3 pts)** | Striking, vivid words catch the reader’s senses; strong use of action verbs | Some use of active verbs and strong words; lapses into “to be” verbs at times | | Includes wordy expressions, repetition of the verbs “is” and “has” and other state-of-being verbs |
| **Sentence Variety (3 pts)** | Shows mastery over a variety of sentence openers and structures and uses them appropriately | Contains some varied sentence structure; most sentences follow subject-verb pattern | | Does not contain much sentence variety |