

ANNOTATIONS FOR THE “6” ESSAY

1. What makes this a “6” essay?

The essay has a thoughtful and well-developed introduction with a clear thesis. The two body paragraphs are unified with clear topic sentences, relevant examples, and sufficient detail to clarify those examples. The writer’s examples are strategic enough to suggest an intimate and persuasive knowledge of the topic. Each of the examples is elaborated through vivid details and careful critical insights that consistently connect the examples to the thesis. Consistent transitional words highlight the skillful organization and logical sequence of development. The conclusion not only clarifies the main idea expressed throughout the essay; it also provides the reader with memorable and interesting observations. Last, the essay has outstanding sentence variety, precise and varied vocabulary, and a distinctive voice. There is only one major grammatical error in the essay, a fragment caused by the misuse of a semi-colon; otherwise, the essay has only minor errors in pronoun agreement and some spelling errors.

2. What did readers like most about this essay?

The greatest strength of this paper is the use of various personal experience examples. In the first body paragraph, for instance, there are three distinct examples provided. Each example is not only carefully described but also well-developed in that the student successfully explains the relevance of each example to the topic sentence claim. The examples are fully realized yet succinct, which results in a lean, controlled development with no inappropriate generalizations or vague ideas. Moreover, the ideas expressed in the introduction and conclusion convey sincerity and personal integrity. Hence, the reader is gratified by the well-roundedness of the essay whose opening and closing engage the reader’s imagination. Furthermore, readers were impressed by the poised and consistent command of sentence structure. For instance, the student uses numerous compound and complex sentences, each of which is beautifully constructed with a precise use of punctuation, especially commas and semi-colons.

3. What can be improved in this essay?

Although this paper received a grade of “6”, the thesis statement is not as carefully formulated as one usually expects in a high pass essay. In place of the vague phrase “That’s why...” the student could incorporate precise reasons that would strengthen the thesis claim and provide a clearer sense of direction for the essay.

Another concern that readers expressed is the repetition or overlap of examples from one body paragraph to the next. For instance, in body paragraph two, the author says that “you may realize that you have an interest in reading books”; this example echoes an earlier example from body paragraph one: “You can find new interests while attending college.” Although these two examples might seem to make different points at first

glance, notice the repetition of the word “interest.” Both examples are making the same claim that going to college will help students develop new interests. Since each body paragraph should have a main idea that is clearly distinct from the main ideas in the other body paragraphs, these two examples, which make the same point, should have been placed in the same paragraph. This similarity suggests a weakness in the overall organizational scheme of the essay.

A third concern expressed by instructors is that a key element of the thesis claim--“that *parents* should push their children to go to college”-- is not carried over into the discussions in the body paragraphs. In fact, the word “parents” is never mentioned in the body paragraphs; the unity of the essay could be improved if the writer referred to “parents” within the body paragraphs. By dropping the focus on the parents, the student shifts the emphasis of the argument to a more general explanation of “why people should go to college.” With this shift, the essay does not fulfill the thesis statement’s promise that the student will discuss the role of the parents.

Because of these characteristics, some instructors felt that this essay should have received a score of “5.”

4. Evaluate the opening paragraph.

The opening paragraph contains a well-developed introduction with a clear thesis. The opening set of questions and discussion reveal the student’s awareness of possible counterarguments against the thesis claim that parents should encourage their children to attend college. By exploring reasons that some individuals might *not* want to attend college, the student demonstrates knowledge of both sides of this complex issue. By establishing the opposing position first, the student is able set up her or his own thesis position more efficiently. Furthermore, the thesis is clearly stated. The student could, however, make the thesis more specific by providing reasons why parents should push their children to attend college. As stated earlier, those reasons could replace the phrase “That’s why” located at the beginning of the thesis statement. The previous sentence, for instance, provides a reason that could be incorporated into the thesis statement.

5. Evaluate the first body paragraph

The first body paragraph has a clear topic sentence, relevant examples, and sufficient details to clarify the examples. Consistent transitional words highlight the skillful organization and logical development of ideas. The topic sentence is well-written and appropriate since it provides a reason that supports the thesis. This reason (“a chance to do positive things”) is developed through three distinct and equally compelling examples: “find skills to attain career goals”, “become more social”, and “find new interests.” Moreover, each of these examples is elaborated with concrete and vivid details drawn from the writer’s personal experience. In describing these personal experiences, the

author's voice is confident and sincere, which lends the essay a compelling authenticity. Also, each example is well-developed in that the student successfully explains the relevance of each example to the topic sentence claim. Finally, the paragraph contains excellent sentence variety, distinctive vocabulary, and no grammatical or mechanical errors.

6. Evaluate the second body paragraph.

The second body paragraph has a clear topic sentence, relevant examples, and sufficient details to clarify the examples. Consistent transitional words highlight the skillful organization and logical development of ideas. The topic sentence summarizes the main argument of the body paragraph concisely and provides a second creative reason that supports the thesis. Furthermore, this paragraph is also filled with several well-developed examples—all of which clearly support this paragraph's topic sentence claim. For instance, in this example the student explains that GCC student services led his friend to consider the possibility of enjoying a career in aviation mechanics. By telling the reader that Eddie has almost completed the necessary educational requirements for a career in aviation mechanics, the student implies that anyone who attends college will become more self-aware in ways that will lead to future success. Finally, the paragraph contains excellent sentence variety and no major grammatical errors. The writing is strengthened by the use of precise and varied vocabulary, in words and phrases such as, "reluctant... infatuated... clandestine... Holocaust... determines... best suited... aviation mechanics... prerequisites... construct... develop... ability," and so on.

7. Evaluate the conclusion

The student restates the thesis in the concluding paragraph in order to remind the reader of the main argument made in this essay. In addition to restating the thesis, the student ends with a few words of encouragement for those students who might feel apprehensive about attending college. In this way, the student shows a sophisticated awareness of the most appropriate audience for this essay—students who are considering attending college due to some parental pressure. This conclusion also creates a sense of closure by addressing the concerns of those students who might not wish to attend college, as described in the introduction.