Holistic Writing Rubric for Timed Essays
(AP Literature and Composition Model)

Your score reflects the quality of your essay as a whole. You are under a time constraint, so a few minor errors in mechanics are acceptable, but an essay with too many distracting errors in grammar and mechanics will not score higher than a C. All essays receiving a C+/B- or above MUST address the work’s meaning as a whole and not simply identify individual elements or techniques. Essays receiving a C or below make significant errors in interpretation, inadequately address the prompt, and/or do not address the meaning of the work as a whole.

NOTE: An essay may occasionally land between categories (for example, it may be given a score of 5/6 or 5.5). This is done at my discretion and in most cases to benefit the writer. A 5.5, for example, is really a 5, but I am giving it a slightly higher score because I feel that it deserves more.

9 [A+ (100%)] Similar to an A, but marked by more sophisticated analysis and insight and more effective control and manipulation of language.

8 [A (95%)] These essays offer a well-focused and persuasive analysis. Using apt and specific textual support (including quotes), these essays fully explore the topic and demonstrate what it contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole. Although not without flaws, these essays are in-depth, make a strong case for their interpretation, and discuss the literary works with significant insight and understanding.

7 [B+/A- (90%)] Similar to a B, but marked by sharper and fuller analysis and more consistent command of the elements of effective composition.

6 [B (85%)] These essays offer a reasonable, effective analysis. They explore the topic and demonstrate what it contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole. These essays show insight and understanding, but the analysis is less thorough, less perceptive, and/or less specific in supporting detail than that of those in the A range.

5 [C+/B- (80%)] These essays respond to the assigned task with a plausible, satisfactory reading, but they tend to be underdeveloped in evidence and/or analysis. They may rely mostly on plot summary that contains only some analysis, implicit or explicit. Although the essays attempt to discuss the topic and how it contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole, they may demonstrate a simplistic understanding of the work. They may demonstrate only adequate control of language.

4 [C (75%)] These essays offer a less than thorough understanding of the task or a less than adequate treatment of it. They reflect an incomplete or oversimplified or superficial understanding of the work. They may not address or develop a response to how the topic contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole, or they may rely almost entirely on plot summary. These responses usually show unsophisticated thinking. They may lack effective organization or be marred by surface errors.

3 [D+/C- (70%)] Although these essays attempt to respond to the prompt, their assertions may be unsupported or even irrelevant. They may contain significant misreading. Often wordy, elliptical, or repetitious, these essays may also lack control over the elements of college-level composition.

2 [D (65%)] These essays compound the weaknesses of those in the C range. They are often unacceptably brief or are incoherent in presenting their ideas. They may be poorly written on several counts and contain distracting errors in grammar and mechanics. In short, the ideas in the essay are presented with little clarity, organization, or supporting evidence.

1 [F (0%)] These essays do little more than make reference to the task or are completely off-topic.