

# Grade 6–8 Essay Rubric

At the end of each unit, students write a longer, more developed essay over a sequence of 4–5 lessons. Students draw on their core lesson writing practice, in which they focus on one claim or idea in response to a prompt and develop text evidence to support their claim or idea. In the essay lessons, students then apply those skills to a more developed piece of writing, and also practice additional skills as they create an introduction, craft a strong claim statement, develop a conclusion, and revise and polish their writing for an audience.

This 6–8 rubric reflects students' core practice with focus, use of evidence, and conventions, as well as the particular skills they practice during these essay lessons.

## Rubrics

### Use of Evidence: Selecting, Describing, and Explaining

| 1 Needs Improvement   | 2 Developing Proficiency  | 3 Proficient   | 4 Exceeds Expectations   |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p>The evidence is not relevant or developed to support the claim.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The evidence selected is not relevant.</li><li>• The key parts and elements of the evidence are not described.</li><li>• There is not sufficient explanation of how the evidence supports the claim.</li></ul> | <p>The evidence is somewhat relevant and developed to support the claim.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The evidence selected is somewhat relevant.</li><li>• The key parts and elements of the evidence are somewhat described.</li><li>• There is some explanation of how the evidence supports the claim.</li></ul> | <p>The evidence is mostly relevant and clearly developed to support the claim.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The evidence selected is mostly relevant.</li><li>• The key parts and elements of the evidence are described.</li><li>• There is a mostly clear explanation of how the evidence supports the claim.</li></ul> | <p>The evidence is relevant and skillfully developed to support the claim.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The evidence selected is relevant.</li><li>• The key parts and elements of the evidence are described clearly.</li><li>• There is a clear explanation of how the evidence supports the claim.</li></ul> |

## Focus & Logical Structure

| 1 Needs Improvement  | 2 Developing Proficiency  | 3 Proficient  | 4 Exceeds Expectations  |
|--|---|---|---|
| <p>The parts of the essay do not focus on and develop one overall idea or argument.</p> <p><b>Introduction:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has a lead with little to no connection to the essay</li> <li>Does not contain a claim or the claim does not state the overall idea or argument</li> <li>*In some essays, a counterargument is not included.</li> </ul> <p><b>Body:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paragraphs are not focused on and do not develop the overall idea or argument.</li> <li>Little to no sequence of ideas</li> <li>Minimal use of transitional strategies to build on or connect ideas within or between paragraphs</li> </ul> <p><b>Conclusion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not follow the overall idea</li> <li>Does not include a final thought</li> </ul> | <p>The parts of the essay somewhat focus on and develop one overall idea or argument.</p> <p><b>Introduction:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has a lead that is somewhat connected to the essay</li> <li>Has a claim that somewhat states the overall idea or argument</li> <li>*In some essays, a counterargument is included.</li> </ul> <p><b>Body:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some paragraphs are focused on and develop the overall idea or argument.</li> <li>Some sequence of ideas</li> <li>Occasional use of transitional strategies to build on or connect ideas within and between paragraphs</li> </ul> <p><b>Conclusion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Somewhat follows the overall idea</li> <li>Includes a final thought</li> </ul> | <p>The parts of the essay mostly focus on and develop one overall idea or argument.</p> <p><b>Introduction:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has a lead with a connection to the essay</li> <li>Has a claim that states the overall idea or argument</li> <li>*In some essays, a somewhat logical counterargument is included.</li> </ul> <p><b>Body:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most paragraphs are focused on and develop the overall idea or argument.</li> <li>Mostly logical sequence of ideas</li> <li>Mostly consistent use of transitional strategies to build on or connect ideas within and between paragraphs</li> </ul> <p><b>Conclusion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mostly follows the overall idea</li> <li>Includes a final thought</li> </ul> | <p>The parts of the essay clearly focus on and develop one overall idea or argument.</p> <p><b>Introduction:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has an engaging lead with a strong connection to the essay</li> <li>Has a claim that skillfully articulates the overall idea or argument</li> <li>*In some essays, a logical counterargument is skillfully included.</li> </ul> <p><b>Body:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paragraphs are focused on and develop the overall idea or argument.</li> <li>Effective sequence of ideas</li> <li>Consistent use of transitional strategies to build on or connect ideas within and between paragraphs</li> </ul> <p><b>Conclusion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clearly follows the overall idea</li> <li>Includes a final thought</li> </ul> |

### Conventions: Sentence Completion, Punctuation, and Citation of Direct Quotes

| 1 | Needs Improvement  | 2 | Developing Proficiency   | 3 | Proficient   | 4 | Exceeds Expectations  |
|---|--|---|--|---|--|---|---|
|   | <p>The essay contains numerous errors that interfere with understanding the meaning and the evidence citations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are fragments and run-ons that interfere with meaning.</li> <li>Quotes are not punctuated and cited according to the Guidelines.</li> </ul> |   | <p>The essay contains some errors that interfere with understanding the meaning and the evidence citations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most sentences are complete and punctuated correctly, but some errors interfere with meaning.</li> <li>Some quotes are punctuated and cited according to the Guidelines.</li> </ul> |   | <p>The essay contains few errors that may distract but not interfere with understanding the meaning and the evidence citations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most sentences are complete and punctuated correctly.</li> <li>Most quotes are punctuated and cited according to the Guidelines.</li> </ul> |   | <p>The essay contains no errors that interfere with understanding the meaning and the evidence citations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Almost all sentences are complete and punctuated correctly.</li> <li>All quotes are punctuated and cited according to the Guidelines.</li> </ul> |

NOTE: Amplify uses the term “claim” in all essay assignments rather than alternating between “claim,” “thesis statement,” and other such terms. Whether students are writing argumentative or informative essays, the claim is the statement that articulates the controlling idea or argument developed in the essay.

| Unit<br>▼                         | Skills<br>► | Use of Evidence  | Logical Structure | Conventions | Essay Type                    |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|--|-------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|
| 8A: Perspectives & Narrative*     |             | X  | X                 | X           | Argumentative                 |
| 8B: Liberty & Equality            |             | X  | X                 | X           | Informative                   |
| 8C: Science & Science Fiction*    |             | X  | X**               | X           | Argumentative                 |
| 8D: Shakespeare’s Romeo & Juliet* |             | X  | X                 | X           | Argumentative                 |
| 8E: Holocaust: Memory & Meaning   |             | X  | X                 | X           | Informative                   |
| 8F: The Space Race Collection     |             | X  | X                 | X           | +Informative OR Argumentative |
| 8G: Advanced Story Writing        |             | See Story Writing Essential Teacher Resources for Rubrics for: Character Development, Sensory Details, Narrator’s Voice, Varying Sentence Style, Logical Structure |                   |             | Narrative Writing             |

\*A star next to the unit title indicates that these essays require students to address counterarguments.

+Students following the comprehensive path will complete the informative essay option in Unit 8F.

\*\*In the essay for 8C: Science & Science Fiction, students do not write a separate introduction or conclusion paragraph. Instead, students write a claim statement and concluding sentence in each paragraph.