

**General Writing Notes:**

- Use Present Tense when writing about literature or prose.
- No symbols (&)! Write it out!
- No empty sentences/No fluff!
- Don't praise. Unless you have doctoral degree as an expert on the author, you are not qualified to have an opinion on greatness, skill, or awfulness.
- First time – author's full name. From then on – author's last name.
- Woman/women
- No 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> personal pronouns. No "I think, I feel, I see..." It is your essay – the reader knows it is your idea! These personal pronouns make your tone less formal and less objective.
- When writing an academic paper, avoid making philosophical generalizations.
  - For example: The novel shows that people are very judgmental and when you judge others you are not looking at your own shortcomings.
  - Instead: The novel shows that judging others is easy while judging oneself is difficult. Chillingworth, a diabolical character, obsesses over his wife's sin while ignoring his own.
- The theme of a text is not one word: sin, hypocrisy, guilt, etc. A theme is what the author is conveying about that word. Examples: Sin is a natural aspect of the human condition. Hypocrisy prevails in a culture of ignorance. Guilt kills the human spirit.
- Eradicate *this, these, it* whenever possible
- Length matters!
- Make the characters commit the action in a sentence. Avoid passive voice. For example: NOT: Hester is convicted of adultery. YES: The town convicts Hester of adultery and requires her to wear the scarlet A.
- Skim through for passive voice, overused verbs, empty words.
- The English mantra is "Show. Don't tell!" In other words, don't write: In this essay, I will explain how the need for revenge fuels the antagonists in *The Scarlet Letter*. Instead: The need for revenge fuels the antagonists in *The Scarlet Letter*.
- Punctuate correctly – titles and foreign words
- No contractions are allowed in a formal paper/essay.

- Be careful when using pronouns. When you write, Hester is the only character **that** is fully redeemed. What you really mean is: Hester is the only character **who** is fully redeemed. Hester is a *who*, not a *that*.
- Use better verbs; they should be strong and active!
- Write out words less than 100. Three, not 3.
- Avoid using dead words. They are boring.
- I am banning: “This shows” “This uses” “This is.” These sentence constructions are weak.
- *Effect* is almost always used as a noun. *Affect* is used as a verb.
- Plot summary is NOT ok. You may need to introduce and connect things, but simply giving a summary of the plot is a waste of time, space, and grade. PS is the twin sister of BS – neither is acceptable.
- Avoid overused transitions such as *In conclusion, first, second, last...*
- Tone – use only one word (unless it shifts or changes). No laundry list. Even if it shifts/changes should still be only 2 words.
- Think about proving yourself as if you are a lawyer in a trial.

### **Introductions:**

- Intros should introduce. Do not jump in too abruptly.
- Intros should be quick, dirty, and interesting if you are writing a timed in class or test essay.
- This is the first thing the reader sees. Use the full title and the author’s full name. Make me want to read your paper.
- Stay away from the 3 point thesis. Do not be basic in your thesis construction.

### **Conclusions:**

- Do NOT write “In conclusion...”
- Conclusion – should be new! Do not rehash what you have already said – it should answer “So what?” It should elevate the paper. Do not simply restate the introduction.

### **Quoting:**

- Use quote marks when using pieces of the passage/source. Even if it is only one word.
- Use pieces of quotes, not whole sentences. Only use what you are going to analyze.
- If you use a quote, you **must** analyze/connect/explain it! **ACE!**

- Quotes must work into your sentences properly. Quotes should almost always be embedded. Introduce – quote – explain/analyze.
- Do not just pull out lines/passages from the work and list it. This is called a “Dropped quote.” Do not just “drop” a quote in without proper introduction, connection, and analysis. That is not analysis. No “drive-by quoting!”
- Do NOT start or end body paragraphs with quotes. The only times it is acceptable to start a paragraph with a quote is when you use one as a hook for your introduction. There is really no acceptable time to end a paragraph (even a conclusion) with a quote.

### **AP Prose Essay Notes:**

- Pay attention to what the prompt asks – AP stands for ANSWER the PROMPT! Do not repeat the prompt.
- Length matters
- Use terms when you know them, but
- If you don’t know how to talk about it, DON’T.
- Don’t define terms. Readers know the terms.
- analyze the passage.
- Annotate the prompt and sketch out a little plan. 5 minutes to read, annotate, plan. Then, write for 35.
- Massive writing mistakes drop your score. Spelling is important
- Misreading the prompt massively drops your score.
- More complexity and better writing needed for an 8/9
- DO NOT bring in outside lit! Focus on the work and element you are analyzing.