

THOUGHTS ON THEMES

What is expected of a theme that is graded A or B.

Contents: A significant central idea clearly defined and supported with concrete, substantial, and consistently relevant detail.

Style: Rhetorical and Logical Development--Theme planned so that it progresses by clearly ordered and necessary stages and developed with originality and consistent attention to proportion and emphasis; paragraphs coherent, unified, and effectively developed; transitions between paragraphs explicit and effective.

Organization: Sentence Structure--Sentences skillfully constructed (unified, coherent, forceful, effectively varied).

Diction: Distinctive: fresh, precise, economical, and idiomatic.

Grammar, Punctuation, Spelling: Clarity and effectiveness of expression promoted by consistent use of standard grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

What is expected of a theme that is graded C.

Content: Central idea apparent but trivial, or trite, or too general; supported with concrete detail, but detail that is occasionally repetitious, irrelevant, or sketchy.

Organization: Rhetorical and Logical Development--Plan and method of theme apparent but not consistently fulfilled; developed with only occasional disproportion or inappropriate emphasis; paragraphs unified, coherent, usually effective in their development; transitions between paragraphs clear but abrupt, mechanical, or monotonous.

Style: Sentence Structure--Sentences correctly constructed but lacking distinction.

Diction: Appropriate: clear and idiomatic

Grammar, Punctuation, Spelling: Clarity and effectiveness of expression weakened by occasional deviations from standard grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

It is clear that an excellent theme or a good theme is effective and contains few errors, none serious. A theme reasonably correct, if it is not hopelessly ineffective or barren of content, will usually receive a passing grade. Ordinarily, a D or F theme ranks low in effectiveness and contains numerous errors, such as one or more of those listed below:

1. Three misspelled words (different words)
2. Two serious grammatical errors. Among such serious errors are specifically:
 - Disagreement of subject and predicate in number.
 - Using wrong case of a pronoun after a verb or preposition.
 - Using a wrong verb form.
 - Using an adjective for an adverb or an adverb for an adjective.
3. One unjustifiable "sentence fragment."
4. One "run-on sentence" or "fused sentence."
5. One unjustifiable "comma splice" (sometimes called "comma fault" or "comma blunder").
6. One use of the semicolon where there should be no punctuation or merely a comma.
7. Three serious errors in punctuation not specified above (3,4,5,6).
8. Two pronouns without antecedents when antecedents are plainly needed.
9. Two badly constructed sentences.

Failure to observe the assignment is also reason for an F grade.