Essay Elements

What to comment on/ look for as you read....

Introduction

A good introduction piques the reader's attention with a problem statement, gives readers a sense of how others are discussing this topic and why the discussion is of value in relation to the writer's key idea and illustrates a "roadmap"

| Topic Sentences and Concluding Sentences | |
|--|---|
| Every body paragraph should begin with a clear, argumentative topic sentence. The topic sentence should preview the content of the paragraph within the context of the thesis statement. Topic sentences should always contain an argument and should be in the writer's voice (rather than evidence). Concluding sentences should answer the "so what" question as to why that information in the paragraph was pertinent to the thesis or the argument. | If a paragraph's topic sentence is not immediately obvious, look for sentences within the paragraph that contain information appropriate for a topic sentence. Perform a "topic sentence backwards outline." On a separate sheet of paper, chart the first sentence of each paragraph. Do the sentences support the logical development of the paper's argument? If not, does the illogic reflect paragraph content or paragraph order? |
| Development and Unity | |
| All paragraphs should be organized logically and in an accessible way. After the topic sentence, the writer should develop his or her argument by using evidence (a fact, a paraphrase, a quotation, or a summary) from source material. In addition to presenting the source material, the writer should analyze the evidence in terms of his or her argument. The writer's analysis of evidence should relate to the paragraph's topic sentence and, in turn, to the thesis statement. | Reverse outline to assess each paragraph's topic sentences and the relationships between paragraphs. Examine each paragraph and ask: "What is the point of this paragraph?," "Why is this paragraph located at this point in the paper?," and "How does this paragraph relate to the thesis?" Take notes in the margins. Examine the list of descriptions that you made for each paragraph and ensure that you understand the logic behind each paragraph's contribution to the argument. Does the evidence detailed in each paragraph supplement the paragraph's topic sentence? Is the evidence relevant and accurate? |