

Essay 3: Open Letter

For Essay 3, you will draft, revise, and polish a 1-2 page response to a controversial public statement made by an authority figure or community leader that affects you personally. The goal of the Open Letter is to help you learn to effectively use rhetorical strategies, engage with real-world leaders and issues through writing, and communicate your own thoughts and ideas in response to others.

Content Requirements:

- Concise introduction that provides context for the discussion and includes a clear thesis statement.
- Well-organized body paragraphs that include a topic sentence, relevant reasoning and textual evidence, and a linking sentence to connect the analysis back to the main point of the essay.
- Incorporation of relevant textual evidence/examples using the “evidence sandwich” method throughout
- Clear conclusion that reiterates the thesis statement and considers the “so what” or broader implication (in this case, a call for specific action on the part of the community leader)
- Thorough and direct response to the community leader’s documented stance, using effective rhetorical strategies to persuade everyone in the community. (Note: documentation may include a speech, interview, text message, or any other first-hand source.)
- Accurate MLA citations throughout, both in-text and in the Works Cited page, for all sources used.

Form Requirements:

- Appropriate grammar, spelling, and syntax
- Minimum 1-2 full pages (more is okay, less is not)
- Typed, single-spaced
- Times New Roman, 12 point font, 1” margins
- Formatted as a formal business letter (see attached template)
- Page numbers at the bottom center of every page.

Topic Parameters:

You may choose any community leader and any controversial subject, but please avoid conspiracy theories as well as offensive or oppressive stances. Your topic must be approved by the instructor before the end of class on February 25.

Submission:

Rough Draft: upload to Blackboard + bring **TWO** hard copies to class on March 3

Final Draft: upload to Blackboard + bring ONE hard copy to class on March 17

Grading:

Essay 3 will be graded holistically using a rubric, based on how well you adhere to each of the content and form requirements.

[Your Full Name]

[Your address]

[Date letter will be sent]

[Name of recipient]

[Full address of recipient]

Dear Mr./Ms./Mrs./Mx./Dr./Professor/Senator/Governor/other title [Last Name(s)]:

[Write your letter in single-spaced paragraphs, with no indent of the first line. Be sure to use in-text citations as per usual.]

Sincerely,

[Sign your name by hand here]

[Type your full name]

[Insert MLA Works Cited here.]

Essay 3 Rubric

	Does Not Meet Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
Introduction	The introduction does not provide context for the discussion at hand. There is no thesis statement.	The introduction provides some context for the discussion at hand but is overly reliant on rhetorical questions, dictionary definitions, or sweeping generalizations. There is a thesis statement, but it does not accurately reflect the claims made in the body paragraphs of the essay.	The introduction provides some compelling context for the discussion at hand but one or two sentences may be overly general or irrelevant. There is a thesis statement that anticipates some, but not all, of the claims made in the body of the essay.	The introduction provides clear, concise, and compelling context for the analysis at hand. The essay includes a concise thesis statement that accurately reflects the claims made in the body of the essay.
Body Paragraphs	The body paragraphs do not include a topic sentence, relevant textual evidence, and/or a connection to the thesis statement.	One body paragraph includes a topic sentence, strong textual evidence, and a clear connection to the thesis statement, but the other paragraphs need further development.	Most of the body paragraphs include a topic sentence, strong textual evidence, and a clear connection to the thesis statement, but a few areas may need further development.	All body paragraphs include a topic sentence, strong textual evidence, and a clear connection to the thesis statement.
Evidence	There is no textual evidence.	Some textual evidence is incorporated in a clear way, but many sections are missing portions of the quotation sandwich.	Most textual evidence is incorporated in a clear and engaging way, but some sections may be missing portions of the quotation sandwich.	All textual evidence is incorporated in a clear and engaging way, using the quotation sandwich.
Conclusion	There is no concluding paragraph.	The conclusion either reiterates the central claims or considers the broader “so what” implications, but not both.	The conclusion reiterates the central claims and considers the broader “so what” implications of the argument, but some portions may be vague or otherwise unclear.	The conclusion thoroughly and critically reiterates the central claims and considers the broader “so what” implications of the argument.
Rhetorical Strategies	The student has not used effective rhetorical strategies to persuade the entire community which does not demonstrate understanding of the skills covered in Unit 3.	The student has attempted to use effective rhetorical strategies to persuade the entire community, but there are several areas that are poorly argued or unclear, which demonstrates a rudimentary understanding of the skills covered in Unit 3.	The student has mostly used effective rhetorical strategies to persuade the entire community, but there are one or two areas that would benefit from further development, which demonstrates understanding of the skills covered in Unit 3.	The student has effectively used rhetorical strategies to persuade the entire community, which demonstrates mastery of the reading and writing skills covered in Unit 3.

Form	The essay is not formatted as a formal business letter. It is significantly less than 2 pages. The grammar, spelling, and syntax detract from the point the author is attempting to communicate.	The essay is inconsistently formatted as a formal business letter. The essay is just under 2 pages. The grammar, spelling, and syntax are somewhat appropriate for the point the author is attempting to communicate, but significant additional proofreading is needed.	The essay is mostly formatted as a formal business letter. The essay is at least 2 full pages. The grammar, spelling, and syntax are mostly appropriate for the point the author is attempting to communicate, but some additional proofreading is needed.	The essay is formatted as a formal business letter. The essay is at least 2 full pages. The grammar, spelling, and syntax are appropriate for the point the author is attempting to communicate.
Revision	The author has submitted multiple drafts but has not revised based on feedback.	The author has submitted multiple drafts, but revision has focused primarily on surface issues such as grammar. Additional substantive revision in response to feedback is needed.	The author has submitted multiple drafts, and most of the revision has been substantive. One or two pieces of feedback may still need to be addressed.	The author has submitted multiple drafts, and all feedback has been addressed through revision.

Essay 3 Peer Review

Instructions: Each author should read their essay aloud to their peer. Reviewers should write feedback directly on the page, then discuss their feedback with the author.

Reminders for reviewers:

- There are no right or wrong answers. If something doesn't make sense to you, the problem isn't you—it's the clarity of the writing.
- Read as a reader helping a peer improve their work. Don't be rude. And don't correct grammar. Frame your responses as positive action items ("I'd like to hear more about...") rather than negative scolds ("This doesn't make any sense.").

Reminders for authors:

- Write one non-grammatical concern you have about your essay at the top of the essay.
- Listen. Don't defend or modesty-trash your own work.
- Ask clarification questions.

What to Look For/Write Down:

1. As you read the paper aloud, underline or circle any words, phrases, or sentences that you stumble over or that you don't understand so the author can work on the wording later. DO NOT MARK GRAMMAR.
2. Put a star next to 3 parts of the essay you really like. Write in the margins what you like about them.
3. Put a question mark next to 3 parts of the essay that you didn't understand or that need further detail. Write in the margins what you feel the author could do to clarify.
4. Based solely on what the author has written, explain their argument in your own words. To whom are they responding? What argument are they responding to? Do you, as a reader, find the argument to be convincing? Why or why not? What more could the author add to persuade their audience?
5. Choose 2 different colors of crayons. Use one color to highlight the author's voice/argument. Use the second color to highlight the community leader's voice/argument (include direct quotes as well as paraphrases and summaries). Then write a note at the end of the essay explaining where the author does a good job of incorporating both perspectives and where they could more clearly incorporate one or both voices.
6. Does the author have accurate in-text citations and Works Cited page? If not, make a note of areas that need revision.
7. Check formatting: date at top; recipient's name and address; appropriate salutation; single-spaced body paragraphs with no indent; polite sign-off; author's typed name; 12-point Times New Roman font (this prompt is written in the appropriate font).

When you've finished Writing Your Feedback:

1. Discuss your findings with the author. Remember to phrase your feedback in terms of what the author could do to improve, rather than what they've done wrong.
2. Revise based on your peer's feedback.
3. Review the prompt sheet and rubric to make sure you're on the right track.