

Writing an Informational/Explanatory Essay - Understanding the Rubric

Informational writing is designed to explain a process or event. For example, the *Formative Writing Assessment* you did at the beginning of the year was an informational essay on the different sources of the democratic tradition that influenced the founding of the US government. *The History Informational Rubric* is used to grade essays. This activity will help you gain a greater understanding of the rubric, and how it can be used as a target and a tool to improve your informational essay writing.

1. Read the rubric. Annotate the rubric. Be sure to put question marks next to parts of the rubric you are unclear about.
2. Look at the four categories of the rubric: Focus, Development, Organization, and Conventions. Write any questions you have about what each of these categories mean?
3. Read the sample essay, "Democracy: Not a New Idea" and circle the rubric in each of the four categories for this essay. What grade would you give this essay and why?
4. Mark the parts of the introductory paragraph that addresses the prompt and underline the controlling idea of the essay.
5. Draw lines between the ideas in the introduction and where each idea appears to be developed in a body paragraph. What do you notice about the connection between the introduction and the body paragraphs?
6. What makes the body paragraphs effective? Explain.
7. How were sources in the essay used as evidence? How were they cited?

8. Now take a new rubric and the Formative Writing Assessment essay you wrote at the beginning of the year and grade your own paper. Circle the parts of the rubric that most accurately apply to your paper.

9. Write a note or comment to yourself for your first effort. In the area below include what you think you did well on the Formative Assessment and what areas you need to work on.

10. The Formative Writing Assessment was not graded because we hadn't taught you how to write this type of essay. However, what grade would you give your essay, if it had been graded. Use the rubric categories of Advanced, Proficient, Basic, Below Basic, and Far Below Basic and give your paper a grade.

11. Now, look at the rubric I filled out when I read your paper. In what areas did you and I have a similar score? In what areas did we differ in our assessment of your writing? Did we give your paper a similar or different grade?

12. What writing goals do you have to improve your writing on the upcoming essay on the Industrial Revolution?