

An **“A” paper** responds to this assignment with fresh and persuasive insights.

- This commentary focuses on explicating significant words/phrases of a selected passage and provides compelling insight into the passage as a whole.
- It is consistently directed at an audience who has read the passage, but needs to be reminded of contexts and themes.
- A concise and fluid description of the passage gives the reader a sense of the artist’s craft.
- The entire paper follows the conventional format of a textual commentary.
- Definitions of specific words and/or phrases from the *MED* and/or *OED* are included.
- The style is fluent throughout; sentences are logically sequenced, and transitions are smooth.
- There are no serious or distracting mechanical errors.
- The writer has thought hard about the passage, read it carefully, and has presented ideas in an engaging way.

A **“B” paper**, like the “A” paper, is one that goes beyond a routine summary of the lines. The ideas are fresh and compelling, rather than fairly obvious. What keeps it from the “A” grade could be lack of adequate development or minor, but distracting stylistic elements.

A **“C” paper** is one that adequately fulfills this assignment’s objectives – it has all the pieces, but may develop them unevenly, giving the resulting commentary a lopsided feel, reflect inadequate or underdeveloped insight about its subject.

- This commentary may include description that gets overly detailed or that in an attempt to be concise, not enough information is given.
- The explanations of lines may lack enough development to become fully persuasive.
- The audience might be occasionally expected to have scholarly expertise to understand the explanations.
- The explanations may lack focus, or the sentences may not transition into each other fluently.
- The explanations are perhaps more perfunctory than memorable.
- This paper may contain some errors in grammar, punctuation and usage, but most of these mistakes do not seriously interfere with the reader’s understanding of the paper at large.

A **“D” paper** is one that responds to this assignment in an inadequate or general way.

- Its explanations may become obscured by serious mechanical/stylistic problems or it may be undeveloped to the point where the reader becomes disengaged.
- It may provide only a vague focus and be more intent on simply describing the lines.
- It may start out with a focus and lose it.
- It may base its explanations solely on subjective opinion and fail to provide adequate evidence.
- It may, alternately, provide an overly detailed description and an underdeveloped explication.

An **“F” paper** is one that fails to fulfill this assignment’s basic objectives.

- It may lack clear explanations of words/phrases/lines.
- It may be so poorly organized that readers cannot decipher the important ideas presented and cannot find the writer’s main points.
- It may contain so many spelling and grammatical errors that the reader has difficulty deciphering it.
- It may be that the writer has borrowed heavily, both in terms of wording and ideas, from secondary sources.
- In this paper, for these reasons or others, the primary objective of the assignment is missed entirely.