

Rubric & Assignment Grading Matrix

ENGL 340 — The Modern Novel: Narrative Form and Ideology

Meridian University ▪ Department of English ▪ Fall Semester

Assignment Details

Assignment: Critical Analysis Essay
Prompt: Narrative Unreliability in 20th-Century Fiction
Length: 2,000–2,500 words
Format: MLA 9th ed., double-spaced
Weight: 25% of final course grade
Due: Friday, October 30, 2026, 11:59 pm

Student & Submission

Student: Marcus Whitfield
Student ID: MU-2029-0417
Section: 340-02, T/Th 2:00 pm
Instructor: Dr. Elena Voss
Submitted: October 30, 2026
Graded: November 6, 2026

Grading Scale

Level	Points	Descriptor
Excellent	4	Sophisticated, original work that exceeds expectations in every dimension of the criterion.
Proficient	3	Solid, competent work that meets all core expectations of the criterion.
Developing	2	Adequate work with noticeable gaps in execution, depth, or consistency.
Beginning	1	Significant revision required; core requirements of the criterion are largely unmet.

Criterion Weighting

Relative weight of each criterion toward the 100-point total for this assignment.



- Thesis & Argument (20%)
- Evidence & Textual Support (20%)
- Analysis & Critical Thinking (25%)
- Organization & Structure (15%)
- Style, Voice & Mechanics (10%)
- Citation & Formatting – MLA (10%)

Grading Matrix — Overview

Quick-reference summary; full descriptors for each criterion follow below.

Criterion	Wt.	Excellent (4)	Proficient (3)	Developing (2)	Beginning (1)
Thesis & Argument	20%	Original, precise, argument-driving thesis	Clear, arguable thesis shapes the essay	Vague or overly descriptive thesis	Thesis absent or restates the prompt
Evidence & Textual Support	20%	Abundant evidence, seamlessly integrated	Sufficient, relevant evidence, competent use	Thin or generic supporting evidence	Claims unsupported; evidence misquoted
Analysis & Critical Thinking	25%	Interprets form; anticipates counterarguments	Interprets rather than merely describes	Leans on summary over interpretation	Little analysis; mostly plot recounting
Organization & Structure	15%	Purposeful, cumulative, sustained argument	Logical order, clear transitions	Formulaic or occasionally disjointed	No discernible structure
Style, Voice & Mechanics	10%	Precise, varied prose, virtually error-free	Clear, correct, occasional lapses	Frequent errors interfere with clarity	Pervasive errors impede readability
Citation & Formatting (MLA)	10%	Consistently accurate MLA 9 citations	Mostly correct, minor inconsistencies	Inconsistent or incomplete citations	Citations absent or malformed

Detailed Criteria

1. Thesis & Argument			Weight: 20%
Excellent	4	The thesis is precise, arguable, and advances a genuinely original reading of narrative unreliability; every paragraph visibly serves it.	
Proficient	3	The thesis is clear and arguable and shapes the essay's direction, though its originality or precision could be sharpened.	
Developing	2	The thesis is present but vague, overly broad, or descriptive rather than argumentative; its connection to body paragraphs is inconsistent.	
Beginning	1	The thesis is missing, merely restates the prompt, or cannot be located within the essay.	
Points Awarded: / 4			Comments:

2. Evidence & Textual Support			Weight: 20%
Excellent	4	Textual evidence is abundant, precisely chosen, and integrated seamlessly; quotations are never left to "speak for themselves."	
Proficient	3	Sufficient, relevant evidence supports each claim; integration is competent with occasional over-reliance on summary.	
Developing	2	Evidence is thin, generic, or drawn from secondary summary rather than close reading of the primary text.	
Beginning	1	Claims are largely unsupported, or evidence is misquoted, irrelevant, or absent.	
Points Awarded: / 4			Comments:

3. Analysis & Critical Thinking**Weight: 25%****Excellent**

4 Analysis moves well beyond plot summary to interpret form, technique, and ideology; counterarguments are anticipated and addressed.

Proficient

3 Analysis interprets rather than merely describes the text, with reasonable engagement of complexity and nuance.

Developing

2 Analysis leans heavily on summary or paraphrase; interpretive claims are asserted rather than demonstrated.

Beginning

1 Little to no analysis is present; the essay is primarily a recounting of plot events.

Points Awarded: / 4**Comments:**

4. Organization & Structure**Weight: 15%****Excellent**

4 Structure is purposeful and cumulative; transitions build a sustained argument from introduction through conclusion.

Proficient

3 Paragraphs are logically ordered with clear topic sentences and generally effective transitions.

Developing

2 Organization is present but formulaic or occasionally disjointed; some paragraphs lack a clear focus.

Beginning

1 The essay lacks discernible structure; ideas appear disconnected or randomly sequenced.

Points Awarded: / 4**Comments:****5. Style, Voice & Mechanics****Weight: 10%****Excellent**

4 Prose is precise, varied, and confident; the essay is virtually free of grammatical or mechanical error.

Proficient

3 Prose is clear and correct with occasional lapses in word choice, syntax, or proof-reading.

Developing

2 Frequent mechanical errors or awkward phrasing interfere with clarity in places.

Beginning

1 Pervasive errors substantially impede readability.

Points Awarded: / 4**Comments:****6. Citation & Formatting (MLA)****Weight: 10%****Excellent**

4 Citations are consistently accurate in MLA 9 format; the Works Cited page is complete and correctly formatted.

Proficient

3 Citations are mostly correct with minor formatting inconsistencies; Works Cited is present and largely accurate.

Developing

2 Citation format is inconsistent or incomplete; several entries are missing or malformed.

Beginning

1 Citations are absent or in the wrong format; no Works Cited page is included.

Points Awarded: / 4**Comments:**

Score Summary

Criterion	Weight	Level Achieved	Points /4	Weighted Score
Thesis & Argument	20%	Proficient	3	15.00
Evidence & Textual Support	20%	Excellent	4	20.00
Analysis & Critical Thinking	25%	Proficient	3	18.75
Organization & Structure	15%	Proficient	3	11.25
Style, Voice & Mechanics	10%	Developing	2	5.00
Citation & Formatting (MLA)	10%	Excellent	4	10.00
Total Score (out of 100)				80.00



% Grade Conversion		
Grade	Range	Description
A	90–100	Excellent, exemplary work
B	80–89	Strong, above-average work
C	70–79	Satisfactory, competent work
D	60–69	Marginal, below expectations
F	0–59	Unsatisfactory, does not meet requirements

Instructor Comments

Marcus, this is a confident and well-researched essay. Your reading of the governess's testimony is genuinely persuasive, and the evidence you draw from the frame narrative is exactly the kind of close attention this assignment rewards — section 2 is the strongest part of the paper.

The thesis in your introduction is clear, but by the third body paragraph the argument has drifted toward a related claim about narrative reliability in general rather than the specific mechanism you opened with; tightening that thread would move Criterion 1 from Proficient to Excellent.

Watch comma splices in your topic sentences (paragraphs 4 and 6) and double-check in-text citation placement relative to closing punctuation per MLA 9. Overall: a strong essay with a clear path to an A-range revision. Office hours are open Tuesdays 1–3 pm if you would like to talk through the introduction before the portfolio deadline.

Instructor Signature:

Date: