

Category	Exceptional	Good	Weak
Cover Page	The cover page includes the author's full name, email address, phone number, and postal address, grade or grade equivalent for homeschooled students; and a title	Submissions without a cover page will not be considered	Submissions without a cover page will not be considered
Topic	Clearly responds to all aspects of the chosen prompt	Partially responds to the chosen prompt	Doesn't clearly respond to the prompt
Emotional Impact	The essay is inspirational and/or able to emotionally explore the topic in an appealing manner	The essay is relatable	The essay lacks an emotional appeal
Supporting Evidence	Provides supporting evidence judiciously to enhance the argument; it comprises no more than 20% of the essay & utilizes the Constitution	Use too much or too little supporting evidence but draws from the US Constitution	Doesn't provide supporting evidence and/or does not draw from the US Constitution
Thesis	Thesis is clearly articulated and evident	Thesis is present but not clear	Thesis is absent
Organization	Argument is presented in a logical and fluid manner	Topic is addressed in a way that lacks fluidity	Essay is disorganized and difficult to follow
Documentation: Use the MLA format	External sources are clearly cited within the essay and in a bibliography (not included in the word count) in MLA format	External sources are partially cited within the paper & an attempt is made at a bibliography (not included in the word count) using MLA format	External sources are not cited and/or the bibliography is absent, i.e., the writer has plagiarized = a disqualified essay
Proofreading	Essay is carefully proofread to follow the conventions of grammar, punctuation, and spelling	Essay contains the occasional error in grammar, punctuation, and/or spelling	Essay is not carefully proofread and contains several errors in grammar, punctuation, and/or spelling
Length exempting the title page and the bibliography	600-800 words	400-599 words	Under 400 words or over 800 words