

An excellent theme is characterized by...

Content: has substance; development in depth; generalizations supported by specifics; logical reasoning; accurate information; originality and imagination.

Style: clear, succinct, interesting, forceful; appropriate to audience and purpose.

Organization: tight, coherent.

Paragraphs: well developed; well organized; clear, smooth transition between paragraphs and within the paragraph.

Diction: generally precise word choice.

Sentence structure: varied; smooth; ideas appropriately subordinated and coordinated.

Grammar: (near-) perfect.

Mechanics: (near-) perfect.

Spelling: (near-) perfect.

A passable theme is characterized by...

Content: not fully developed; generalizations supported by some specifics; mostly logical reasoning; generally accurate information.

Style: generally clear; reasonably succinct.

Organization: loose, but still coherent; has at least some unity.

Paragraphs: adequately developed; adequately organized; some transition between and within paragraphs.

Diction: generally adequate word choice.

Sentence structure: a bit choppy, stringy, monotonous, or awkward; occasional faulty syntax.

Grammar: no pattern of serious errors.

Mechanics: no run-on sentences; no pattern of serious errors, e.g., common splices or unnecessary fragments.

Spelling: occasional misspelling.

An unpassable theme is characterized by one or more flaws...

Content: obvious or trite ideas; undeveloped ideas; generalizations not supported by specifics; illogical reasoning; inaccurate information; plagiarism.

Organization: disorganized; lacks unity.

Paragraphs: undeveloped; lacking transition between paragraphs and/or within paragraphs.

Diction: imprecise, vague, or wrong words; reliance on cliches; noticeably unidiomatic phrasing.

Sentence structure: invariably choppy or stingy sentences; pattern of faulty syntax.

Grammar: pattern of serious errors.

Mechanics: pattern of serious errors, e.g., run-on sentences, comma splices, unnecessary fragments.

Spelling: pattern of misspelled words.