

“In Their Own Words” Adam Matthew Student Essay Contest Rubric November 2021

Essay Prompt and instructions:

- Students will receive access to the *American History: 1493-1945* and select 1-2 documents to write a 500-600 word essay on the following theme:
 - How did reading/viewing this primary source document(s) change your understanding of this event, person, or time period?
- Use evidence from the document in your essay to support your response. You may draw on additional primary or secondary sources to support your ideas, but this is not required.

Note:

- Before applying the rubric, reviewers should ensure that the students have identified 1-2 documents from AMD and that their essay aligns generally to the length specifications.
- Submission form should require students to name the document(s) they are basing their essay on.

Essays being considered for the “In Their Own Words” competition are being evaluated based on content, effective use of primary sources, and style. For each of these areas, each submission should be assigned a score of 1-5. In our final calculation of the score, the content score will be weighted by 40%, effective use of primary sources will be weighted by 40%, and the style score will be weighted by 20% to produce a weighted average. For example, a submission that received a 3 for content, a 4 for primary source use, and a 5 for style would receive a total score of 3.8 out of 5¹.

5	<i>A score of 5 will predominantly have the following characteristics. Entries need not present all characteristics to earn a score of 5.</i>
CONTENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prompt is directly addressed ● Main ideas and position are clear, focused, and compelling; knowledge, experience, insight, or unique perspective lends a satisfying ring of authenticity, novelty, and inventiveness. ● Provides clear and detailed context for the reader using appropriate background information. ● Shows a grade-appropriate knowledge of relevant historical content.
EFFECTIVE USE OF PRIMARY SOURCE(S)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cites specific evidence from the primary source with a clear connection to main ideas ● Demonstrates understanding of the meaning and importance of the primary source content ● Makes multiple relevant connections between selected primary source and relevant historical content ● Shows a grade-appropriate ability to research and distinguish between primary and secondary source documents

¹ 3 x .40 = 1.8, 4 x .40 = 1.6, and 5 x .20 = 1, for a weighted average of 3.8.

"In Their Own Words" Adam Matthew Student Essay Contest Rubric

November 2021

STYLE & ORGANIZATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The piece is organized in a way that guides the reader through the main ideas and key ideas stand out. • Uses grade-appropriate vocabulary accurately and effectively, with an overall natural tone, incorporating some common and uncommon words correctly and to enhance overall meaning. • Sentences or lines are well built and skillfully crafted to reflect logic and sense. • Uses a consistent citation style. (Citations need not be in a traditional academic style.) • Very few and minor grammatical errors.
---------------------------------	--

4	<i>A score of 4 will predominantly have the following characteristics. Entries need not present all characteristics to earn a score of 4.</i>
----------	---

CONTENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prompt is directly addressed • Main ideas and position and most ideas are clear and focused; some elements may not be fully explored; needs additional details in some places to expand the main topic or provide insight. • Shows at or near a grade-appropriate knowledge of relevant historical content.
----------------	---

EFFECTIVE USE OF PRIMARY SOURCE(S)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cites specific evidence from the primary source with some connection to main ideas • Demonstrates general understanding of the meaning and importance of the primary source content • Makes at least one relevant connection between selected primary source and relevant historical content • Shows at or near a grade-appropriate ability to research and distinguish between primary and secondary source documents.
---	--

STYLE & ORGANIZATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The overall structure of the piece is effective, but the balance of ideas and relationships among ideas could be improved. • Details fit naturally and effectively where they are placed; sequencing makes the text easy to follow and understand. • Uses grade-appropriate vocabulary accurately, effectively, and correctly. • Sentences or lines may not seem skillfully crafted (though sentences are grammatically correct). Most sentences or lines reflect logic, and, for the most part, show how ideas relate. • Citations may be in an inconsistent style and may contain minor errors. (Citations need not be in a traditional academic style.) • Contains few grammatical errors, though they are occasionally serious enough to be mildly distracting.
---------------------------------	--

3	<i>A score of 3 will predominantly have the following characteristics. Entries need not present all characteristics to earn a score of 3.</i>
----------	---

"In Their Own Words" Adam Matthew Student Essay Contest Rubric

November 2021

CONTENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prompt is somewhat addressed. ● Main ideas are identifiable, but could be more precisely worded and a lack of clarity interferes with the reader's interest. ● Shows a nearly grade-appropriate knowledge of relevant historical content.
EFFECTIVE USE OF PRIMARY SOURCE(S)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cites vague evidence from the primary source with some connection to main ideas ● Demonstrates general understanding of the meaning, but not importance, of the primary source content ● Makes at least one connection between selected primary source and indirectly relevant historical content ● Shows a nearly grade-appropriate ability to research and distinguish between primary and secondary source documents.
STYLE & ORGANIZATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The structure of the piece is functional, but may be so dominant or predictable that it smothers the ideas; the main ideas are appropriately sequenced, but may be better arranged; lingers too long on some ideas and skims over other points. ● Vocabulary is used correctly in most cases; words may occasionally interfere with meaning. ● The structure shows control over simple structure, and reflects some logic, but may not always show how ideas relate. Some fragments or (in the case of essays or short stories) run-on sentences may be present. ● Citations may be in an inconsistent style, may contain errors which may be a bit distracting. (Citations need not be in a traditional academic style.) ● Errors are numerous or serious enough to be a bit distracting, but the writer handles most conventions well.
2	<i>A score of 2 will predominantly have the following characteristics.</i>
CONTENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prompt is not addressed. ● Main ideas are vague and require the reader to infer the position. The ideas are unfocused and rarely compelling. ● Shows well below a grade-appropriate knowledge of relevant historical content.
EFFECTIVE USE OF PRIMARY SOURCE(S)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cites vague evidence from the primary source but there is minimal connection to main ideas ● Demonstrates limited understanding of the meaning of the primary source content ● Does not connect selected primary source with relevant historical content ● Shows well below a grade-appropriate ability to research and distinguish between primary and secondary source documents.

"In Their Own Words" Adam Matthew Student Essay Contest Rubric

November 2021

<p>STYLE & ORGANIZATION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The structure feels more random than purposeful, often leaving the reader with a sense of being adrift; the pacing is very rough, and main ideas should be more effectively arranged and delivered. • Vocabulary is frequently incorrect, superficial, and/or inadequate, interfering with meaning. • Shows some control over simple structure, but little or no control over more complex structure. Few sentences or lines reflect logic and show how ideas relate; frequent run-ons and (in the case of essays or short stories) fragments are present. • Citations may be in an inconsistent style, may contain errors which are serious enough to distract the reader frequently. Some citations may be missing entirely. (Citations need not be in a traditional academic style.) • Errors are numerous or serious enough to distract the reader frequently.
<p>1</p>	<p><i>A score of 1 is the minimal score of the contest. Entries with a score of 1 will predominantly have the following characteristics.</i></p>
<p>CONTENT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prompt is not addressed • Main ideas are unclear, out of focus, indistinct, or not known. • Does not present a grade-appropriate knowledge of relevant historical content.
<p>EFFECTIVE USE OF PRIMARY SOURCE(S)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not cite evidence from the primary source in support of main ideas • Demonstrates limited understanding of the meaning of the primary source content • Does not connect selected primary source with relevant historical content • Does not present a grade-appropriate ability to research and distinguish between primary and secondary source documents
<p>STYLE & ORGANIZATION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The structure of the piece is haphazard and disjointed, severely inhibiting the reader's comprehension of ideas; there is no clear sense of pace or direction to carry the reader smoothly from point to point. • Vocabulary is incorrect and inappropriate, and words corrupt meaning and confuse the reader. • The structure has little or no control, and tends to obscure meaning, rather than showing how ideas relate; persistent run-ons and/or fragments are present. • Citations are in an inconsistent style, contains errors which are continually distracting and/or are largely or entirely absent. (Citations need not be in a traditional academic style.) • Errors continually distract the reader, and the reader must read once to decode and again for meaning.