



Assignments that Work Well in SAGrader

The following examples are actual SAGrader writing prompts taken from a variety of disciplines. These prompts demonstrate just some of the types of assignments SAGrader can handle well.

U.S. History (The American Revolution)

To what extent did the American Revolution fundamentally change American society? In your answer, be sure to address the political, social, and economic effects of the Revolution in the period from 1775 to 1800.

U.S. Government (The Fed)

Describe the structure and function of the U.S. Federal Reserve. What is its most important function? Why have some people called it 'the most powerful branch of government'?

Sociology (Social Deviance)

Read the following description of Warren's life. Identify 6 social deviance concepts that are illustrated in the story. For each concept that you identify, provide a definition and quote the passage of the text that illustrates that concept.

Psychology (REM sleep)

Discuss in detail the characteristics of REM sleep. Identify both the neurological and physiological effects caused by REM sleep. Describe the stages of the sleep cycle that occur before REM sleep. What distinguishes REM sleep from other sleep stages?

Biology (Zebra Evolution)

The striped pattern on zebras' coats is considered to be an adaptation that helps reduce the likelihood of a lion or other predator identifying and preying on an individual animal. The ancestors of zebras were probably not striped. Using your understanding of the processes of mutation and natural selection, describe how a population of striped zebras might have evolved from a population of zebras without stripes.

Biology (Chronic Infection)

A child is hospitalized for a series of chronic infections. The severity of the illness is increasing. The white blood cells (WBCs) of the child are filled with live bacteria. The bacteria are phagocytized but are not killed by the white blood cells. (A) Which two cellular organelles are involved? (B) What is the function of each organelle involved with respect to this problem described in this question?



Assignments that Don't Work Well in SAGrader

SAGrader is not useful for grading broadly defined essays with no specific content focus. SAGrader is designed to assess a student's knowledge about a substantive topic as expressed in a specific writing assignment.

Persuasive Essay

The school counselors are planning a series of panel discussions to address challenges facing teens. They are seeking student recommendations for topics. Write a persuasive essay identifying the teen challenge you think should be the first topic for the panel discussions. Provide specific examples and reasons to support your recommendations to the counselors.

Why this doesn't work: The assignment has an unlimited range of content. Students could discuss virtually any challenge facing teens, and the assignment is evaluating argumentation skills, not content knowledge.

Expository Short Essays

1. Everyone has days that they will always remember as being very special. Think about a special day that you have had. Write an essay telling why it was so special.
2. If you could change places with another person for a whole day, who would you change places with and why would you choose that person?
3. Think of the ideal job for you when you grow up. Now think of reasons why this would be a good job for you. Write an essay to explain why this is your ideal job.
4. Imagine that time travel to the past was possible. Think of where and when you would like to go for a visit. Write an essay telling where and when you would go in the past and explain why you choose to go there.

Why this doesn't work: These expository essays involve sharing knowledge, messages, instructions, and ideas...but not specific content knowledge. Student can take these essays in virtually any direction, so SAGrader doesn't know what particular concepts to check for.

Creative Writing Essays

1. Take out your high school yearbook and pick someone from your class. Write about what you think he or she is doing now. Go ahead and fictionalize that person.
2. Free-write for 5 minutes using this opening line: "Behind her, the noise escalated..."
3. Write a story about a father looking for his son. The child was one of the passengers in a plane that crashed earlier that day.

Why this doesn't work: Creative writing helps engage students in the writing process and gives them experience writing in different ways, but it's not an activity designed to evaluate a student's understand of particular concepts. Usually, the purpose of creative writing is to encourage students to explore new concepts, but SAGrader can only evaluate assignments that involve a definable range of content.