

Grading Expectations

Although every thesis is entirely distinct, and readers are inevitably subjective, we expect successful theses to excel in four categories: **argument, close reading, engagement with existing scholarship, and writing**. The grades you receive may generally be interpreted as follows:

	A	B	C	D
Argument	Original, interesting, subtly and clearly formulated, identifying a problem of textual interpretation or of literary or cultural history, and advancing an argument that addresses that problem.	Promising, if somewhat vague or overstated. Lacking the last degree of focus, originality, or relevance to the field of study.	Flawed by weak logic or simplicity; lacking an original point of view or conviction. Unable to establish the argument's stakes for literary study.	Absent or unfounded.
Close Reading / Use of Evidence	Textual evidence is carefully chosen, thoughtfully and persuasively interpreted, and well-integrated into the argument. Original and insightful.	Adequate. May be clumsily or superficially handled. More obvious than original. May not fit entirely into the argument.	Thin. Carelessly chosen, poorly glossed, used to summarize plot points or take the place of interpretation. Not integrated into the argument.	Absent. Grossly misinterpreted.
Engagement with Scholarship	Fully conversant with the relevant scholarly literature (which must include literary criticism, but can also include historical scholarship, literary theory, and/or sources from other relevant disciplines). Able to situate the thesis's argument within an ongoing conversation and compellingly add to it.	Sufficient. Engages with the critical field, though lacking the last degree of originality or mastery of the topic.	Inadequately acknowledged or understood. Alternatively, an over-dependence on critical texts to carry the interpretive burden of the argument. In either case, little or no critical engagement with relevant scholarship; no contribution to the existing conversation.	Absent, unacknowledged, plagiarized (F).
Writing	Notable for its economy, eloquence and discrimination. Structurally clear, graceful and progressive. Effectively addresses itself to an audience beyond the thesis adviser.	Correct. Free from errors of grammar, usage, punctuation, etc. May lack elegance or precision. Structurally coherent, though marred by repetitions, weak transitions.	Marred by solecisms, inaccuracy, poor diction. An episodic structure, lacking a sense of direction. Monotonous, dependent for shape on the analyzed text. Poor sense of audience.	Sloppy. Numerous errors of spelling, syntax, etc.