**AP Language & Composition Letter-Essays**

What is a letter-essay? A **letter-essay** is a thoughtful reflection and analysis of a book you’ve read. It is written in letter format and includes both your personal opinions of the book and your analysis of its literary or rhetorical elements. A letter-essay is like a good conversation between highly literate friends. It is short on summary—in other words, it summarizes the plot briefly and only to give context for discussion and analysis.

**Requirements (100 points maximum)**

* Provide a brief summary of the novel in your own words. Include the author, the title, and the genre. (10 points)
* Your opinion: What would you rate it? Why? Would you recommend it to others? (20 points)
* Address at least two literary elements – Character, Conflict, Plot, Setting, Theme. (25 points)
* Include and analyze a passage for literary devices (for fiction) or rhetorical devices (for nonfiction). (25 points)
* 600-word minimum (remember, this includes the passage you’re analyzing), double-spaced in 12-point font, submitted through turnitin.com. (20 points)

**A Sample Letter-Essay**

Dear Mrs. Watkins,

*The Game of Sunken Places* is one of my favorite fantasy novels. Most other authors would have probably made this story muddled and confusing, due to its unique topic, but M. T. Anderson’s quick, to-the-point writing made it an extremely amusing and fast-paced book. Unlike other novels I have read recently, I was involved in the story almost immediately. Greg and Brian are the main characters in this book. Their problem is that Greg’s mysterious uncle invited him and a friend (Brian) to come and visit. When they get to their rooms, they find the Game of Sunken Places. It is an old board game that is an exact replica of the mansion that they are staying in. When they figure out that they are actually in the game, and that two “spirit-nations” are betting on who will win it, they become determined to beat their mysterious opponent:

“Two spirit-nations are at war. You will decide the conflict. On the one side, there are the People of the Mound of Norumbega, who used to live here. On the other side, the Thusser Hordes, who drove them out.” Uncle Max bowed his head against the headrest of the chair.

Gregory demanded, “What happens if we lose?”

“A treaty was struck,” said Uncle Max. “The People of Norumbega were forced into exile. But there is a chance for return. The Game is arranged. Rounds are played. If the Norumbegans win, they will return from their exile. If the Thusser Hordes win, they will take possession of the mountain, the Mound of Norumbega.”

Brian was incredulous. “The fate of this whole spirit-nation depends on whether we win or lose?”

I thought it was an interesting choice Anderson made to change the main character as the book progressed – at first Gregory is the main character, but then Brian begins to slowly take that position. The book is in third person (e.g., “Greg jumped”) so the change is not that drastic. This novel is a combination of fantasy, adventure, and a bit of realistic fiction because most of it could be real, but some parts are fantasy. The only problem I had about *The Game of Sunken Places* was that I found the climax to be a little fast. I think that with the entire plot building up to it, more could have come of it. Because of that, I would rate this an 8.5, not a 9 or a 9.5. If I had to decide one theme for this book, it would be friendship, because that is what is holding G and B together the entire story. In the end, Gregory gives up all the glory and lets Brian become the hero. They worked as friends to win the game for the good side. Then when they figured out that they were supposed to be opponents, Gregory lets himself lose for the better good. Overall, I think this book is a great read.

Sincerely,

Max