



## University Interscholastic League

# The Barbara Jordan Historical Essay Competition

## Essay Checklist

As you write your essay, refer to the following checklist to guide your progress. The rubric is built around this checklist. *There is room for creativity; however, please consider these guidelines as suggestions for submitting an effective essay for this competition.*

### **1. Pre-Writing:**

- Create a [thesis statement](#) about a far-reaching topic
- Gather sources (mainly [primary sources](#))
- Read and analyze sources
  - [Take notes](#) while you read sources
    - Use a variety of notes: quotes, paraphrases, and summaries
    - The notes must support the thesis statement

**Is my thesis statement  
"far-reaching"?**

Watch "My Grandmother is a Warrior" for an example of a far-reaching topic and thesis statement.

### **\* 2. Writing:**

- Create an [outline](#)
- Write rough draft (based on outline)
- [Proofread](#) the rough draft

### **3. Post Writing:**

- Write a final copy with developed paragraphs (introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion)
- Create a [MLA](#) or [APA](#) style bibliography
- Use the rubric on the next page to ensure essay includes necessary requirements

*\* Notes, outline and rough draft are not requirements of the essay competition; however, they are strongly encouraged.*



## Essay Competition Rubric

### High Range Essays 9-8

- \_\_\_ Effectively proves thesis statement about a far-reaching topic
- \_\_\_ Purposefully utilizes a variety of research with a focus on primary sources
- \_\_\_ Is clear, well organized, and coherent
- \_\_\_ Includes ample commentary that bolsters key ideas presented in researched material
- \_\_\_ Contains very few errors or flaws, if any
- \_\_\_ Parenthetical citations are effectively utilized that refer to an accurate Works Cited page
- *A 8 and 9 paper have a mature, sophisticated writing style rarely seen in a 7 paper*

### Middle Range Essays 7-6-5

- \_\_\_ Adequately proves thesis about a far-reaching topic
- \_\_\_ A variety of research is incorporated and/or attempted including primary sources
- \_\_\_ The argument is generally convincing but less cogent or developed; 5 essays may be somewhat weak
- \_\_\_ Includes sufficient commentary that supports ideas in researched material
- \_\_\_ Contains only minor errors or flaws
- \_\_\_ Citations are mostly accurate that refer to an attempted Works Cited page
- *A 7 paper demonstrates a more consistent command of writing conventions than does the 5 or 6 paper.*
- *A 5 paper does the minimum required by the assignment. It often loses focus and includes unnecessary details.*

### Low Range Essays 4-3-2-1

- \_\_\_ Inadequately attempts to prove thesis; topic might not be far-reaching
- \_\_\_ Researched material is lacking in variety and/or primary source material
- \_\_\_ Writing demonstrates consistent weaknesses such as a lack of organization, awkward sentences, and word choice
- \_\_\_ Commentary about research material is lacking.
- \_\_\_ Contains multiple errors that might hinder understanding of essay
- \_\_\_ Multiple problems exist surrounding parenthetical citations and Works Cited page (example: a majority of the citations and/or Works Cited page is missing)
- *A 3 or 4 have a major error preventing this essay from being adequate.*
- *A 1 or 2 indicates major lack of understanding and control. It may also indicate severe writing problems.*



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**Barbara Jordan Essay Competition**  
Essay Resources

1. Thesis Statement Examples.....page 4
2. Sample Body Paragraphs with Annotations.....page 5  
*\* This sample uses MLA formatting; however, APA is also acceptable.*
3. Works Cited Page Example.....page 6  
*\* This sample uses MLA formatting; however, APA is also acceptable.*



## University Interscholastic League

### Barbara Jordan Essay Thesis Statement Examples

- Without the influence of African American culture, Texas art would have a much more insipid identity, and frankly, the unique culture of Texas would not exist without the contributions of African Americans in theatre.
  
- Barbara Jordan was a Texas politician and leader of the Civil Rights movement who utilized her skills to make a positive impact overcoming numerous obstacles for the African American community.
  
- Even though James L. Farmer began his early life in a small town outside of Dallas with limited opportunities, he became one of the most passionate and noble Civil Rights Activists working to ensure freedom for all Americans.
  
- Because of the milestones Lauren Anderson accomplished in her life, she has paved the way for young female dancers today to follow their dreams in the dancing world.

*\* Students who write about a family member or community leader should make sure this person has impacted society beyond the community level- watch "My Grandmother is a Warrior" for an example of an effective topic about a family member.*



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## Introduction Paragraph & Beginning of 1<sup>st</sup> Body Paragraph

**Formatting:** Margins are 1"- top, bottom, left, and right.

Determination to Succeed

The font used is **Times New Roman, Size 12.**

Humans can sometimes take life for granted disregarding influences that shape their lives such as: morals, religion, and education. Education plays an essential role in our life, not only for its capacity to make people book smart- but also expanding people’s knowledge of unknown possibilities. Doctors, lawyers, police officers, vets, painters, and every other career imaginable had to start somewhere- namely, education and determination. To one man education and determination were priorities. He once proclaimed that, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world” (“Quotes”). This man did just that. **He created a legacy that will never be forgotten through his influential contributions to establish a free public education in Texas.** This man is Matthew Gaines.

Matthew Gaines was born on August 4, 1840 near Alexandria, Louisiana to a female slave owned by Martin Despallier. From a very early age, Gaines distributed qualities of a determined human being despite obstacles he faced. Gaines taught himself to read from smuggled books that he took from his slave owners. Besides being determined, Gaines was obviously daring and brave enough to commit acts that could possibly lead to trouble. After being sold from the Despallier family, he escaped from his new owner in Louisiana to Arkansas, and eventually made it to New Orleans, where he was captured and returned to his master. In 1859, Gaines was sold to Christopher Columbus Hearne, where he remained until 1863 when he tried to flee to Mexico (Oak 13).

The writer includes **parenthetical citations** when using researched material. When consecutive sentences use the **same** source- a citation is only needed at the end of the paragraph.

There is a clear **thesis statement** in the introduction paragraph.



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**Formatting:** Margins are 1" - top, bottom, left, and right.

The font used is **Times New Roman, Size 12.**

### Work Cited

"BROWN V. BOARD: Timeline of School Integration in the U.S." *Teaching Tolerance*. Apr.-

May 2004. Web. 27 Feb. 2013.

"Matthew Gaines The 1870s:." *Texas State Library and Archives Commission*. 26 Aug. 2011.

Web. 27 Feb. 2013.

Oak, Manali. "Why Is Education so Important." *Buzzle.com*. Buzzle.com, 24 Nov. 2011. Web.

27 Feb. 2013.

"Quotes About Education." (*1181 Quotes*). Web. 26 Feb. 2013.