



UIL Essay Contests

Summarized Judge Feedback for 2016-17 Contestants

Strengths:

- As a whole, essays were stronger this contest year. (Great work students!)
- Students were passionate about their essay subjects.
- Many students incorporated sophisticated diction and syntax.

Areas Needing Improvement:

- Choose an essay subject who is far reaching.
 - In the Latino Historical Essay competition especially, judges read papers where the essay subject was not someone whose influence reached outside a small group of people.
- Include a variety of quality sources. Many students incorporated a personal interview, which is a great way to include a primary source. However, besides that interview, there needs to be a **variety of credible sources**.
 - In addition, be picky about the sources. Instead of defaulting to using history.com, review other sources for information.
 - Also, judges would welcome the use of newspaper articles, encyclopedias, books, and scholarly journals when possible to prove a thesis statement.
- Avoid clichés completely.
- Provide commentary and contextualization. For example, if you write- “He would always help people”- make sure you explain *how* he helped people. What did this person *do*? Also, be careful not to overstate the truth when describing someone’s influence.
- Cite correctly and consistently. Many papers had sparse citations that were used only for direct quotations. Your paraphrases and summaries need in-text citations (or end notes) as well.
- Proofread, proofread, proofread.