Pay close attention to:

1. **What's the "Because**"? Remember that a good thesis statement clearly states your position in the argument, and it LISTS the reasons for your position. Now, the "list" does not need to be all in one sentence. Several of the best essays devote a sentence to each individual reason. But the reasons are listed. The writer says that the audience should or should not take a certain course of action "because." and then lists those reasons. If your essay does not do this, you will almost certainly not earn that "A."

2.  **The conclusion**. The introduction may be more than one paragraph, but the introduction and thesis list the main points that you will talk about in your essay. The conclusion restates your argument and summarizes (or restates) your main points. The conclusion does NOT need to be a "happily ever after" ending. Summarize your argument. Stick to the facts. That's all you need.

3.  **Research, Citation, and Introducing Quotations**. First, notice how many sources the writers list in their Reference Page. "A" papers exceed minimum requirements. Many of our students will use more than ten sources to support their argument. How many will YOU use? Notice, also, that the Reference Page is in correct APA format. By now, all of you should be able to do this. This includes alphabetizing your citations A - Z. After this, notice how many citations the writers use in each paragraph. Good writers will support their ideas with quotations of paraphrases and cite those correctly. Each paragraph should have at least one citation, and many paragraphs will have more. Remember that an important part of your grade is how well you support your position with research and citation. Finally, notice how simply the writers introduce their sources. The magic words here are "**According to**..." Now, you don't have to use these exact words. But introduce your source BEFORE the quotation or paraphrase. Use natural language like "Professor Sterne says...", "Professor Sterne wrote...", "Professor Sterne found...", or "Research shows..." Things like this.

4. **Anticipate the counter-argument**.  Remember that every argument has two sides. Great essays acknowledge this, and good students show that they have considered both sides of the argument. The magic words here are "**Some people say**..."

5. **Using good examples to illustrate their points**. All of these authors use good examples to illustrate their points. The magic words here are "**For example**..."

6. **What you should NOT find in these essays**. Two things that you should NOT find. First, point-of-view shifts. The writers stick to 3rd person point-of-view and don't lose control of that in their essays. Second, the writers understand paragraph boundaries. There are no "run-on" paragraphs. A paragraph is a group of closely-related sentences organized around a single topic. When the topic changes, indent and begin a new paragraph! Remember that even the main points may be subdivided into smaller points that still make up an individual paragraph. If you find a paragraph longer than half-a-page, be very careful that you have not changed topic and created that run-on.

If you have read this, and you look at all six of these points, NONE of them have anything to do with your English language proficiency. You do NOT have to be great at English to write a good paper. All of these essays have some grammatical mistakes. Remember that 2/3 of your grade is based upon organization and thinking -- the points we have outlined above: research, citation, use of examples, paragraph organization, and point-of-view. Yes, good text helps, but it is NOT everything. Learning how to write has little to do with the language that you write in. Learn these points and you should do well. That said, it helps to proofread your paper carefully and eliminate all of the silly grammar mistakes that you can. Keep your sentence length under control. Remember SVO word order. Eliminate verb phrases. Get rid of those incorrect fronted adverbial conjunctions. Don't rely on emotional appeal (adjectives, adverbs, hyperbole, or poetic language). Stick to the facts! Let the facts persuade your reader. Keep your language under control to the best of your ability. Good writing makes complicated points simple. It does NOT make simple points complicated. So use common language that your reader will understand. This is NOT the place to show off your vocabulary. Yes, we want you to develop your vocabulary. But we want you to choose the right words -- and that means using language that is easily understood by your audience.