RED: REVISING + EDITING DECODER

PUNCTUATION

WORDS

1. **Use apostrophes** with possessive nouns/pronouns:
   a. singular possessive ('s)
   b. plural possessive (s')
   c. possessive pronouns *avoid* apostrophes.
      - it's = it is
      - its = possessive form of it
2. **Use pronouns** that match their antecedents in gender, person, and number.

SENTENCES

3. **End with** a: period, question mark, or exclamation mark.
4. **Capitalize**:
   a. first letter in sentence
   b. proper nouns (names of people, places, things)
   c. titles; all words but articles, conjunctions, prepositions less than five letters
   d. quote; first word of quote
   e. days, months, holidays (not seasons)
   f. time-periods; specific names
5. **Use commas:**
   a. between separate items in a list. (Ex: I like grapes, pears, and strawberries.)
   b. between two adjectives of similar meaning or tone used to describe the same noun. (Ex: We went for a walk in the crisp, cold air.)
   c. to prevent misreading. (Ex: Ever since, they've been happy. -vs- Ever since they've been happy... [fragment])
   d. to set off introductory clauses. (Ex: Screaming with excitement, she ran to her grandma.)
   e. to separate a dependent clause in the middle of a sentence; separate with a comma on both sides. If the dependent clause provides clarifying information, it may also be separated by parentheses.
   f. to set off the explainers of a direct quotation. (Ex: The girl sighed, "I don't want to leave.")
   g. between two independent clauses joined by: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so. (FANBOYS)

h. to set off an interjection. If the interjection is at the beginning of a sentence, place comma after it. If interjection is at the end of a sentence, place comma before it.
i. (This code indicates an *unnecessary* comma.)

6. **Use semi-colons**:
   a. to separate two independent clauses that are closely related in meaning.
   b. as a "fancy period," not as a comma.
7. **Use colons to:** introduce a list or quotation, before explanation, clarification, or elaboration, between independent clauses, to separate times and ratios
8. **Use quotation marks** to identify words spoken/written by another source:
   a. When introduced within a sentence, place a comma before the first quotation mark.
   b. When commas and periods come at the end of a quotation, place them inside the quotation marks.
9. **Insert extra information into a sentence with commas, dashes, or parenthesis**:
   a. Commas are most formal, least intrusive.
   b. Dashes are very informal; used in emails and dialogue, not a formal report.
   c. Parentheses are best for inserting short asides such as numbers and dates.

OTHER

10. 1st/2nd or 3rd person is consistent across piece.
11. Use consistent verb tense; past, present, or future.
12. Titles formatted correctly:
    a. Major works (books, plays, long poems) are underlined in handwriting, italicized in type.
    b. Minor works (short stories, articles, poems, songs) are placed in quotation marks.
    c. Titles of works not published (such as your essays) only capitalized.
13. "Other" punctuation error, not otherwise listed.

COMPOSITION

SENTENCES

A. are complete with subjects and predicates. [Fragment present.]
B. include descriptive adjectives/adverbs, used clearly. [Clarification needed.]
C. are varied in length, including use of: prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections to add detail and interest. [Sentences are short and feel choppy.]
D. "sound" varied, with clauses placed before *and* after the core sentence. [Sentence-flow sounds choppy.]

PARAGRAPHS

E. begin with a sentence that clearly introduces the topic. [Topic is not clear.]
F. include following sentences: related to topic, make sense, & in logical order.
   a. [Sentence(s) do not relate to topic.]
   b. [Confusing or contradictory language; I don't understand this part.]
   c. [Sentences seem out of order.]
G. include specific examples to support generalizations or opinions. [This statement needs more evidence.]
H. include transition words that flow from one sentence to the next. [This sentence is an abrupt or surprise shift.]
I. conclude with a summarizing sentence and signals the ending. [The closing sentence needs attention.]

MULTI-PARAGRAPH COMPOSITIONS

J. The first paragraph introduces the main topic; it tells the reader what they are about to read and why they should keep reading. [The topic of this essay is not clearly defined or communicated.]
K. The "first 100 words" have a good "hook" to capture readers' interest. NOTE: Often, the best hooks are hiding later in the piece. [Opening could be stronger.]
L. Each paragraph in body has only one sub-topic that supports the main topic.
   a. [The sub-topic of this paragraph is not clear.]
   b. [There is more than one sub-topic in this paragraph.]
   c. [Some details in this do not support the sub-topic.]
M. Paragraphs transition smoothly, from one to the next. [This paragraph is an abrupt shift and/or does not make clear sense here.]
N. The final paragraph:
   a. closes all open loops. [Reader is left with unanswered questions.]
   b. signals that the piece is ending. [Ending is abrupt.]

STYLE ELEMENTS

O. Remove unnecessary words:
   a. Avoid "clearing the throat."
   b. Use positive form.
   c. Use active voice.
   d. Remove all words adding no value.
P. Optimize word-choice:
   a. Use words that activate the five senses; "show" vs "tell."
   b. Use descriptive verbs.
   c. Avoid cliches, tired phrases, slang.
Q. Use compound sentences intentionally; stack together for cadence (flow).
R. Use parallel structure; sentence elements alike in function share the same grammatical form, including:
   a. Lists
   b. Comparisons
   c. Headings & subheadings
   d. Phrases/clauses within a sentence.
S. Keep related words together.
T. Place emphatic words at the end of sentences.

EXPOSITORY/ARGUMENT WRITING

U. Determine style/voice:
   a. "Classical" = 1st/2nd person conversation.
   b. "Formal" = 3rd person reporting.
V. Avoid rhetorical questions.
W. Avoid unsure language (may, might, etc).
X. Provide background info; do not assume reader has prior knowledge of your topic.
Y. For arguments, defend opinions with facts/evidence.

LITERARY ANALYSIS

Z. Literary analysis is present tense.
AA. Provide background; assume reader of your piece has NOT read the literature.
BB. Support quotes with proper lead-in and transition.
CC. Plot summary must be balanced with your unique and thoughtful analysis.

NARRATIVE

DD. Dialogue: new speakers are signaled with new paragraph and framed with proper transitions.
EE. New characters are introduced with plenty of background.
FF. Plot is developed with strong conflicts.
GG. The resolution solves all conflicts and closes all loops.