Short Story Student Writing Checklist

[Insert writing prompt.] Use this checklist to guide you while responding to the writing prompt.

General
☐ The *title* captures my story in an original or creative way.
☐ I show awareness of *task, purpose, and audience*.

Story Elements and Literary Devices
☐ I introduce the *narrator* and establish and maintain a consistent *point of view* unless I intentionally write from multiple viewpoints.
☐ My beginning *engages* readers. I present a *setting, characters, and central conflict* that sets my story in motion.
☐ My *plot* is *original*; the story is *well-paced and developed.*
☐ I *sequence the events* in a logical order. If I use multiple plotlines, flashbacks, or flash-forward, readers can follow the storyline.
☐ I build a gripping *suspense* to create tension and present a *climax* that shows the turning point.
☐ My *dialogue* purposefully moves the plot forward by revealing feelings, interactions between characters, reactions to setting or events, and so forth. *Dialogue tags,* when needed, enhance the dialogue.
☐ I use *dialect*, as appropriate, to signify a character's geographical *origin, social status, bias, era in which he/she lives, and so on.*
☐ My *ending* resolves the central conflict and answers questions readers might have.

Description
☐ I use precise and accurate *vocabulary* and avoid unnecessary repetition.
☐ I compose relevant *figurative language*—imagery, simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole—to vividly *describe events, settings, and characters* and to elicit a *mood*.
☐ I include strong verbs in *dialogue tags* and describe reactions, gestures, or movements only as needed and not overdone.

Sentence Structure and Transitions
☐ My writing does not include *run-on sentences or fragments*.
☐ I vary my *sentence beginnings* and use different *sentence patterns* for rhythm and stylistic effect.
☐ I include *parallel construction* to enhance my writing.
☐ I add appropriate and varied *transitions* to connect sentences so my writing flows, to convey event sequence, and to show shifts in time and place.

Grammar, Conventions, and Format
☐ I use *proper grammar* except for stylistic effect, such as writing in a character's voice who does not speak in standard English.
☐ My *conventions* are correct—spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.
☐ I use proper mechanics for *dialogue*.
☐ I know when to use new *paragraphs* and indent them appropriately.
☐ I **format** my paper correctly with proper margins and a heading. If I type, I use appropriate font style, color, and size. If I handwrite, it is legible.