

501 Writing Prompts

- 79.** Recent studies have shown that students often perform better on exams if classical music is played softly in the background. However, some students may find the music distracting. Should schools play classical music during exams and/or allow students to listen to it on headphones? Take a position and explain your answer.
- 80.** All across the country, state laws require drivers to wear seatbelts. Not everyone believes the use of seatbelts should be mandatory. What do you think? Make a case for or against mandatory seatbelt use. Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.
- 81.** Most schools require students to read “old” texts such as ancient Greek tragedies or Shakespearian plays. Many students wonder why they should read these texts instead of more contemporary material. Make a case for or against the reading of classical literature in English classes.
- 82.** Should a parent be a child’s disciplinarian, or a child’s best friend? Take a position and explain your answer using specific reasons and examples.
- 83.** More and more Americans are deciding to eliminate meat from their diets and become vegetarians. Do you think this is a good idea? Argue for or against becoming a vegetarian. Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.
- 84.** With the current popularity of sport utility vehicles many people believe that it’s more important than ever for Congress to pass legislation requiring automobile manufacturers to use more fuel-efficient engines. Do you agree that such a law should be passed? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to support your argument.
- 85.** Every year, millions of people visit zoos around the world. But some people believe that zoos are inhumane and that animals should not be kept in captivity. Do you agree? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.

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- 86.** Politicians come from all sorts of professional backgrounds, from lawyers and chief executive officers to actors and even professional wrestlers. On a few notable occasions, politicians with criminal backgrounds have even been elected. In your opinion, should candidates with a criminal record be allowed to run for office? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- 87.** Students who don't want to do their homework can find dozens of sites on the Internet that offer essays for sale. Do you think this is a legitimate business, or should these enterprises be shut down? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- 88.** Do you think the SAT or ACT exam is an accurate measure of a student's aptitude for college? Support your position with specific examples.
- 89.** It has often been said that we can lie with silence as well as with words. Do you agree? Why or why not? Explain your answer.
- 90.** Many students complain about having to learn history. Why do we need knowledge of the past? Write an essay convincing skeptics that learning about the past is important.
- 91.** Woodrow Wilson once said, "Friendship is the only cement that will hold the world together." Do you agree? Use specific reasons and examples to explain your answer.
- 92.** Charles Simmons said, "Live only for today, and you ruin tomorrow." Do you agree? Why or why not? Explain your answer.
- 93.** Thomas Edison, the renowned inventor, is famous for having said, "Genius is one percent inspiration, ninety-nine percent perspiration." Do you agree with this definition of genius? Why or why not?
- 94.** Many of us are fond of music that speaks to our particular generation. Write an essay that convinces others *not* in your generation that your music is worth listening to.

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- 95.** Alexander Smith said, “The great man is the man who does a thing for the first time.” Do you agree with this definition of greatness? Why or why not?
- 96.** The eighteenth century writer Samuel Johnson wrote, “Ignorance, when voluntary, is criminal.” Do you agree? Use specific reasons and examples to explain your answer.
- 97.** For decades, elementary school children across the country had been required to stand and say the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag every school-day morning. That practice has recently been called into question, and standing and reciting the pledge is now voluntary. In your opinion, should students be required to say the pledge, should it remain voluntary, or should the practice be completely abandoned? State your position and use specific reasons and examples to support it.
- 98.** Currently, Americans pay taxes based upon how much they earn: the higher their income, the higher the percentage of that income they must pay in taxes. Many people have been arguing that a flat tax, in which everyone pays the same rate regardless of income, would be a more equitable and desirable tax system. Which of these two tax systems do you think is best, and why? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- 99.** The great inventor Charles F. Kettering said, “The price of progress is trouble.” Do you agree with Kettering’s assessment of progress? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- 100.** The writer Thomas Mann said, “War is only a cowardly escape from the problems of peace.” Do you agree with this claim? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- 101.** Activist Jeannette Rankin once said, “You can no more win a war than you can win an earthquake.” Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

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- 102.** Write an essay explaining why you should be admitted to a particular college.
- 103.** The Roman leader Seneca said, “A great fortune is a great slavery.” Do you agree with this claim? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
- 104.** If your readers were to learn a foreign language, which language do you think they should learn, and why? Write an essay convincing readers to learn that particular language.
- 105.** Many albums and CDs now contain stickers warning parents that the lyrics of some of the songs may not be suitable for children. Some people argue that simply putting a sticker on a label is not enough. What do you think the record industry should do to warn parents about inappropriate lyrics? Explain what you think should be done and why.
- 106.** Should we devote time and money to building a space station on the moon or Mars? Why or why not? Explain your answer.
- 107.** Should people lease or buy new cars? Make a case for the option that you think is best. Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.
- 108.** The inventor and statesman Benjamin Franklin said, “Money never made a man happy yet, nor will it. There is nothing in its nature to produce happiness.” Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.
- 109.** Some states have now made it illegal to drive while talking on a hand-held cellular phone. Do you think this is a good law that should be passed in other states as well? Why or why not? Explain your answer.

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- 110.** The poet W. H. Auden wrote, “Machines are beneficial to the degree that they eliminate the need for labor, harmful to the degree that they eliminate the need for skill.” Do you agree? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to explain your answer.
- 111.** Are students learning enough science in high school? Argue for or against an expanded science requirement in secondary schools.
- 112.** According to an old Greek proverb, “All things good to know are difficult to learn.” Do you agree? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to explain your answer.
- 113.** William Hazlitt wrote, “Man is a make-believe animal—he is never so truly himself as when he is acting a part.” Do you agree? Explain your answer using specific reasons and examples.
- 114.** Imagine that you have a relative who is unfamiliar with computers and has never been on the Internet. Write an essay convincing this relative to get a computer and get online.
- 115.** Imagine that you have found a great apartment to share, but your new roommate doesn’t want any pets. Write an essay persuading your roommate to let you bring your pet with you.
- 116.** According to a Czechoslovakian proverb, “Better a lie that soothes than a truth that hurts.” Do you agree? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to explain your answer.
- 117.** Imagine that your high school (or alma mater) has decided to do away with a club to which you belong (or used to belong). Write an essay persuading school officials not to disband that organization.

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- 118.** “Original” fairy tales, like those recorded by the Brothers Grimm, often contain violence. Some literary critics and child psychologists believe these tales are good for children because they address children’s real fears, feelings, and desires. Others argue that contemporary “sanitized” fairy tales still convey the main themes of the tales and are far more appropriate for children. How do you feel about this issue? Use specific reasons and examples to explain your answer.
- 119.** Imagine that you have made it to the final round of interviews for a new job. Convince your prospective employers that you are the one who most deserves the position.
- 120.** Most high school schedules include a study hall period several times a week. Is study hall a waste of time, or a necessary break from class? State your position and use specific reasons and examples to support your position.
- 121.** Imagine that you have a friend who doesn’t have any money in his or her savings account. Convince this friend that it’s important to create and follow through with a savings plan.
- 122.** During the Christmas holiday season, images of Santa Claus are everywhere, and young children often line up to take pictures with adults dressed as Santa. Some people feel that children should not be led to believe that Santa Claus is real. Do you agree? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.
- 123.** Is there something that you believe is truly worth fighting for? Write an essay persuading others that this cause is worth a fight.
- 124.** Write an essay convincing your best friend to try your favorite brand of junk food.
- 125.** Imagine that you have been asked to help raise money for a local charity. Choose a charity and write an essay convincing readers to contribute to the fundraising campaign.

RUBRIC FOR PERSUASIVE WRITING

Score	6	5	4	3	2	1
	For a grade at this level, your writing:	For a grade at this level, your writing:	For a grade at this level, your writing:	For a grade at this level, your writing:	For a grade at this level, your writing:	For a grade at this level, your writing:
Content: Your written response shows an understanding and interpretation of the writing prompt.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ satisfies the requirements of the writing prompt in a creative and original manner. ■ uses a clear thesis statement. ■ proves the thesis with insightful examples and details. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ provides a thoughtful analysis of the writing prompt. ■ provides a clear thesis statement. ■ offers good examples to confirm the thesis statement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ meets some of the requirements of the prompt. ■ includes some key elements that help explain the thesis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ offers a simple interpretation of the writing prompt. ■ lacks a thesis from which to base the essay. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ meets few of the requirements of the writing prompt. ■ discusses very basic ideas. ■ makes few connections to help explain the thesis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ minimally addresses the writing prompt. ■ digresses, repeats, or dwells on insignificant details throughout.
Development: Your written response gives a clear and logical explanation of ideas, using supporting material.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ builds and elaborates thoroughly. ■ uses examples precisely. ■ develops the topic in an interesting and imaginative way. ■ demonstrates coherence in the development of ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ develops the topic in an acceptable way. ■ uses relevant examples throughout the essay. ■ develops ideas clearly and consistently. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ answers the question in an abbreviated manner. ■ gives brief examples to explain ideas. ■ develops ideas somewhat inconsistently. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ shows weakness in the development of ideas and/or develops ideas without thorough explanation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ contains inaccurate, vague, or repetitive details. ■ has limited development of ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ shows a lack of development of ideas.
Organization: Your written response shows a coherent, orderly, well-reasoned approach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ sets up and maintains a clear focus. ■ establishes a logical, rational sequence of ideas with transitional words and sentences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ has an obvious plan of organization. ■ focuses on the thesis statement. ■ uses appropriate devices and transitions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ has a general focus. ■ obviously attempts organization. ■ exhibits a logical sequence of ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ does not show a logical sense of organization. ■ strays from the topic. ■ can be difficult to follow. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ shows an attempt to create a focus. ■ digresses from the topic. ■ is disorganized. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ is less organized than a 2-point response. ■ exhibits no organizational pattern or focus.
Language Use/Conventions: Your written response shows a sense of audience by using effective vocabulary and varied sentence structure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ has vivid language, fluidity, and a sense of engagement and voice. ■ has sophisticated style of sentence structure, sentence variety, and vocabulary. ■ has essentially no errors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ has good control of mechanics. ■ contains some errors when using sophisticated language. ■ has a slightly lower quality of sentence structure and sentence variety. ■ shows errors when using sophisticated vocabulary only. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ has a sense of audience. ■ uses simple sentences. ■ uses an appropriate level of vocabulary. ■ demonstrates partial control of mechanics. ■ exhibits some errors that do not interfere with comprehension. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ uses vocabulary that is slightly below level. ■ has a vague sense of audience. ■ shows a beginner's control of the language. ■ has errors that begin to interfere with comprehension. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ exhibits little control of the language. ■ has errors that make comprehension difficult. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ shows minimal control of language skills. ■ may be illegible or unrecognizable as English.

A ZERO PAPER is:

- totally unrelated to the topic.
- filled with indecipherable words and is illegible.
- incoherent with illogical or garbled syntax.
- blank.

Scoring Explanations for Persuasive Writing Essays

A score of “6” indicates that your essay satisfies the requirements of the writing prompt in a creative and original manner, using an obvious theme and thesis throughout. Your essay provides a clear and logical explanation of your ideas and uses supporting material precisely. You thoroughly articulate your ideas in a coherent fashion, use precise examples, and develop the topic in an interesting manner. Your essay is orderly and well reasoned, with a clear focus, a logical sequence of ideas, and transitional words and sentences. The essay demonstrates a sense of audience by using effective vocabulary, varied sentence structure, and fluid, sophisticated language that is essentially without errors.

A score of “4” indicates that your essay meets some of the requirements of the writing prompt, including some key elements that help explain the thesis. Your essay may answer the question in an abbreviated manner, giving only brief examples and developing ideas somewhat inconsistently. You give the essay a general focus, make an obvious attempt at organization, and present your ideas in a logical sequence. The language of your essay indicates a general control of mechanics but has a slightly lower quality of sentence structure and variety than a sample 6 score. An essay of this type contains errors only when using sophisticated language.

A score of “1” indicates that your essay only minimally addresses the writing prompt, digressing, repeating, or dwelling on insignificant details throughout. An essay on this level shows a lack of development and exhibits no organizational pattern or focus. Your language skills may be illegible or unrecognizable as English.

Model Persuasive Writing Essays

7. Many parents give children a weekly or monthly allowance regardless of their behavior because they believe an allowance teaches children to be financially responsible. Other parents only give children an allowance as a reward for completing chores or when they have behaved properly. Explain what you think parents should do and why.

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Sample 6 Score

Starting when I was about eight years old, my parents gave me a list of chores that had to be completed each week. If I did my chores, I got an allowance, a bit of change that I could use as I pleased. If I didn't do my chores, I didn't get my allowance. There was no other punishment, but no other punishment was necessary. That dollar or two a week was all the incentive I needed to help out around the house. Whether it was the latest Barbie or a six-pack of Hubba Bubba chewing gum, there was always something I wanted to buy. My parents could always count on me doing my chores.

I think that giving children an allowance for doing chores is a smart parenting move, for it accomplishes four important goals: It helps ensure that important work gets done around the house; it teaches children that they need to do their part to make things run smoothly for the whole family; it rewards children in a realistic, practical way for good behavior; and it helps teach children how to handle money.

I know that some people consider money for chores a form of bribery, and others feel that children should just do their chores anyway, without the incentive of an allowance. They argue that giving kids money for doing chores undermines the lesson that they need to help the family and do their part. I can understand that point of view, and when parents give their children too much money, it does undermine those lessons. But when the allowance is small, it is simply a modern version of the age-old practice of rewarding good behavior. Once children reach a certain age, money is an appropriate and effective reward that helps them learn how to be responsible and how to manage money. They get a sense of what things are worth and how much they have to save and spend to get what they want. And learning to save in order to purchase a desired item teaches them patience and helps children better understand the value of hard work.

Giving children money for doing chores is also a good introduction to the reality of the workplace. If they do the work, they get paid; if they don't do the work, they don't. Extra work can be rewarded with bonuses and extra praise; poor work may result in a pay cut or demotion.

It's important for parents to find the right amount to give. Too much money may make a child feel like hired help and will undermine the goal of teaching children to help simply because they are part of a family that must work together. On the other hand, too little money may make a child feel resentful, as if his or her work isn't worth anything to the household. What's an appropriate amount? It depends upon the amount of chores the child is expected to do and the child's age. If your nine-year-old is only expected to

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clean his or her room, a dollar a week is probably plenty. If your fourteen-year-old is expected to keep his room clean, take out the trash, water the plants, and vacuum the house, then ten dollars a week is more appropriate.

Being paid for my chores helped me have a good attitude about housework, taught me how to save money and spend it wisely, and enabled me to appreciate the hard work my parents did around the house. I'm really grateful that this was the way my parents chose to handle chores in our household.

Sample 4 Score

Should parents pay children for doing chores is a good question. My parents paid me, and my brothers and sister. I never liked doing chores, but getting an allowance each week (if I did my chores) made it not so bad. In fact, sometimes I did extra (like reorganizing the pantry) to get some extra money for something I really wanted.

I think having my allowance depend on my doing chores made me understand what it's like to work. In the "Real World," you don't get paid if you don't do your work. That's how it was in our house.

I also learned that it's hard work to keep a house going, I learned to appreciate all the hard work my mom and dad use to do. In addition, I learned how to save money. I would set aside my allowance to save up for something I wanted, like a new CD player or outfit.

In my opinion, parents should give an allowance for doing chores, but it shouldn't be too much. Children should know that they need to help no matter what. Too much money I think would make him or her feel like their hired help or something. Contrarily, too little money can make him or her feel like their help isn't worth anything to his or her parents. So finding the right amount is important.

In conclusion, giving children an allowance for doing household chores is a good idea. Children learn to work for their money and save what they earn.

Sample 1 Score

Many children they do not behave in properly, they should be punish, no getting reward. They should no be allowance anything. Chores is hard, on the contrary, there to learn for helping that's important. For the family. All to do the parts.

For me, it was vacuuming and the dusting. Every week, for Saturday or else. Forgetting the allowance, there wasn't. Only to be punish for what not to do.

Children should listen, to their parents. Its very important.

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- 21.** More and more farmers and food manufacturers are genetically modifying their crops to reduce susceptibility to disease, improve flavor, and reduce costs. Do you think genetically modifying foods is a good idea? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.

Sample 6 Score

A few decades ago, manipulating genes in people, plants, and animals was just science fiction. Today, it's a reality, and genetic modification may have many positive applications in the future, including the eradication of many hereditary diseases. But like most scientific and technological advances, the genetic modification of organisms for our food supply can be as dangerous as it is beneficial. Because of the potential dangers of this technology, I think genetically altering plants and animals in the food supply is a practice that should be very tightly controlled and carefully studied before it is an accepted and common practice. Unfortunately, it may already be too late for that.

Many people don't even realize that many of their foods are genetically modified organisms (GMOs). GMOs are already prevalent in supermarkets and grocery stores across the country, but manufacturers are not required to label foods as having been made from GMOs. As a result, millions of Americans purchase and eat GMOs every day without even knowing it. Yet we don't even know if GMOs are harmful to our health. We don't really know how GMOs may affect our bodies or our ecosystem. When we mess with DNA, we may be making changes that have all sorts of dangerous repercussions, including some that we may not even realize for several generations.

One of the main concerns about GMOs is the unpredictability of the behavior of altered genes and of the bacteria, plants, and animals that interact with the altered organism. For example, a crop of corn genetically modified to be less susceptible to a particular insect may take on other unwanted characteristics due to the change. It may, for example, become *more* susceptible to another disease, or it could develop a tougher skin on its kernels, or it could decrease the crop's ability to produce vitamin E.

More frightening is the domino effect of genetically modifying foods. Any change in an organism's DNA has the potential to affect not only the organism but also anything that feeds off of it, *including us*. How do we know how GMOs might affect us on a microscopic, genetic level? We don't know, and can't know, without years of studies that track all sorts of potential outcomes over several generations.

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Another fear is that transferred genes may escape from one organism into another. For example, imagine that Strain A of sweet peas was altered by adding a gene that would increase its sugar production. Through cross-pollination, this altered genetic code could enter other strains and slowly (or quickly) infect the entire sub-species. If the alteration was beneficial, this could be a good thing. But the altered gene might not act the same way in all varieties, and the change may not be a good thing in the first place, and/or it may have unintended consequences.

Genetically modifying foods is a practice that has been driven by the desire to make more food available more quickly and more cheaply than ever before. This attitude puts profit first and consumers and the environment last, and that is simply dangerous. The agribusiness needs to slow down and stop selling us GMOs until their safety is certain.

Sample 4 Score

In my opinion GMOs (genetically modified organisms) are a bad thing. Because we don't know enough about them, and they could be dangerous, we don't even know it. There needs to be more studies done before we know for sure its safe.

For example, modified genes could jump from one GMO to another GMO. Another problem is we don't know what other effects a genetic modification might have. If you change a plant to produce more sugar or something that might make its fruit sweeter it might ruin something else in the plant.

We eat GMOs even though it may not say so on the label. I'm worried because we don't know how those GMOs might affect our bodies. Who knows? Technically these are new foods that no human being has ever eaten before. It may be a small change but it's a change and it could be dangerous.

I think there should be a lot of studies to determine the safety of GMOs and I think any food that has GMO in it should have a big "GMO" label on it. We should know what we're eating and how it might affect us.

Sample 1 Score

Do I think genetically modifying foods is a good idea? No. My idea, its bad. Could be very dangerous. We don't no, its genes an noone ever did this kind of thing before. What could be the affects? You changing the plant from its foundation. What are the other changes it could be? This is scaring for me.

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I like eating healthy food like soy. These make me feel like I'm putting good in my body. GMOS these make me feel like I'm putting bad in my body. I worry who is the mad scientist.

- 22.** A few decades ago, many families had half a dozen or more children. Nowadays, more and more families are choosing to have only one or two children. Are smaller families better than larger ones? Why or why not? State your position and support it with specific reasons and examples.

Sample 6 Score

I grew up in a large family—I am the oldest of six—and I have many wonderful memories from my childhood. I am very close to most of my siblings and I treasure my relationships with them. But when I have my own family someday, it won't be as big as the one I grew up in. As much as my large family was full of love, and as much as I learned about sharing, giving, and patience, I think having too many kids puts too much pressure on the parents and the oldest children.

When I think back on my childhood, I remember playing with my siblings or grandparents. I don't remember spending a whole lot of time with my mother and father. They were always around, but they were always busy. Although they did their best to spend some quality time with each of us, there was just too much to do to keep our large family going. My mother was always cooking, cleaning, nursing, changing a diaper, shopping, or taking someone to baseball practice or a playdate. She was always tired.

My father, on the other hand, was always working. He needed overtime whenever he could get it, and weekends were always full of projects around the house. He had lots of helpers, of course, but there are only so many things kids can do. Even when we were able to get away for vacation, Mom and Dad couldn't really relax, because there were so many kids to look after.

Money was also a constant worry for my family. With so many children, our budget was always tight. Back-to-school shopping was always a stressful time; we all wanted the latest fashions, but we could only get a few things. My younger siblings lived on hand-me-downs as much as they could. We shopped at bargain stores and often got clothes that we didn't really like because they were on sale. Our house always needed repairs, and there was never enough money to keep up.

Another problem with large families is that the older siblings always end up being babysitters. Like it or not (and most of the time I didn't like it), I

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had to watch my younger brothers and sisters. At age six, I could change a diaper like a pro. I was getting my brothers and sisters dressed, giving them breakfast, helping them get ready for bed. I learned a lot about sharing, self-sacrifice, and responsibility at an early age, and these are important character traits that I value highly and want to instill in my children. But I also want to give them a chance to *be* children. I don't want them to have so much responsibility at such an early age.

I don't want to give the impression that I didn't have a happy childhood. I most definitely did; I was loved as much as my parents could love me, and I had wonderful fun with my brothers and sisters. But I always wanted a little more time with Mom and Dad, and I often resented having so much responsibility. I wished my mom wasn't always so tired and my dad didn't have to work so much. Because I want to be there more for my kids, because I want them to *be* kids throughout their childhood, I plan to have a much smaller family.

Sample 4

These days, more and more families have only a couple of kids, whereas, a few decades ago, families were much bigger, with sometimes as many as ten kids in the family. I grew up in one of those big families (we have six kids, and I am the oldest). I had a great childhood, but based on my experience and my family's, I would say that it's better to have a smaller family.

One reason I say this is because I was the oldest, and I sure did a lot of babysitting. My mom was always asking me to watch the kids while she went to the store or took one of the other kids somewhere. I don't blame her, if I had that many kids I sure would need a helper, too. But lots of times I felt like it wasn't fair and I didn't get to do things with my friends because I had to watch my brothers and sisters. I also had to change a lot of diapers, too—and I mean a lot!

I also think smaller families are better for another reason: because my mom and dad were always working and tired. I guess if you have a whole lot of money, then it isn't such a problem. However, we didn't, and my dad was always working, while my mom was always working around the house or running us around somewhere. I wished I could have spent more time with them, too.

I really love my family and especially both of my parents. I did have a great childhood, but I think a smaller family is easier and better, especially for the oldest child.

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Sample 1 Score

Are smaller families better than larger ones? This is a big question. I have a large family. There are six kids. I am the oldest children. I have three brothers and two sisters. My youngest brother is ten years younger than me.

My mom, she has eleven brothers and sisters. My dad, he has ten brothers and sisters. They live far away from us. My parents, they had good childhood but for them all it was a lot of work.

- 24.** Good habits improve our physical, emotional, and/or financial health. Select one of your good habits and write an essay persuading readers to make that habit a part of their lives.

Sample 6 Score

When I was fifteen, I wanted to get a job so I could buy a car when I turned sixteen. My father sat me down at the kitchen table and said, “Excellent. But only on one condition: 10% of every paycheck must go into a savings account. And you cannot touch that money except in an emergency.”

“But Dad,” I argued, “If I have to put 10% away, how will I ever save enough money to buy a car?”

“You’ll have enough,” he replied. “And you’ll soon see how important it is to set money aside for savings.”

I didn’t believe him at the time, and in fact I often resented having to put that 10% in a separate account. But two years later when the transmission on my car blew, I didn’t have to fret about coming up with the money for repairs. I was able to cover the cost easily and was back on the road in no time. It was then that I began to see the wisdom of my father’s rule, which I adopted as my own. This habit has helped to give me a secure financial life, and I urge you to make this practice part of your life.

Ten percent of each paycheck may sound like a lot, and if you’re on a tight budget to begin with, you might be thinking, “I just can’t afford to do it.” In truth, you can’t afford *not* to do it. You never know when you are going to need an extra \$100 or \$1,000; life is full of surprises, and lots of them are expensive. You can afford to do this. In fact, you can’t afford *not* to do this.

As tight as your budget may be, it’s important to get started right away. If you are absolutely scraping by with every last penny going to bills, then start with just 5%, but move up to 10% as soon as you can. If you earn \$500 a week, for example, put \$25–\$50 in your savings account each week. At first, this may mean clipping coupons, renting a movie instead of going to

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the theater, or pressing your own shirts instead of taking them to the cleaner. Think carefully about ways you can save just a few dollars—because just a few dollars from each paycheck is all it takes to build up a solid savings account.

The money you save will add up quickly. For example, if your annual salary is \$40,000, each year, you would put \$4,000 into your savings account. That still leaves you with \$36,000 to cover all of your expenses. After ten years, you will have saved \$40,000, plus interest. And the more money in your account, the more interest you earn, the larger your emergency fund, the more you can afford to relax later in your life.

Once you get in the habit of putting 10% of your money into savings, it won't feel like a sacrifice. The 90% that's left will be your working budget, and you won't even miss that 10% because you won't be used to spending it. Yet you will know that it is there, ready for an emergency, helping to keep you financially secure. So take my father's advice, and mine: Put a piece of each paycheck into your savings. It's a habit that's worth every penny.

Sample 4 Score

When I was 15, my dad helped me start a good habit that I still keep to this day, that is saving 10% of every paycheck. Whenever I get paid, I put 10% of that check into a savings account. I don't touch that money except for an emergency or special purchase.

I'm really grateful to my dad for helping me start this habit, though I wasn't at the time, because I wanted to buy a car and I didn't know how I could save up enough money if I didn't put it all towards the car, but he was right, I did save enough, and then I had money for repairs because I'd saved carefully.

The great thing about this habit is, once you're in it, you don't feel like there's any money missing. You use the 90% to figure out your budget, not the 100%. In just one year you can save a whole lot of money.

You're probably thinking, like I did, "I can't afford to put some of my money away, I need it all." However, you're wrong. You can afford it, and you'll be glad because you'll always have money for an emergency. So get started today!

Sample 1 Score

Good habits improve our physical, emotional, and/or financial health. I have many good habit. One, is, I saving money every month. Another, is, I excersize everyday. Also, I am eating healthy. I also do not never use the bad language.

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I am proud of my good habits. What habits do you do that are good for you? Save money like me, also exercise all the time, and eat healthy. It will be wise to do.

- 35.** Is there a book that you feel should be required reading for everyone? Write an essay persuading your audience to read this book.

Sample 6 Score

Most people know who Frankenstein is—or at least they think they do. Because of the way Mary Shelley’s brilliant 1818 novel has been adapted to film, most Americans think that Frankenstein is a towering, scar-faced monster who brings terror wherever he goes. In Shelley’s novel, however, the real monster is Victor Frankenstein, the scientist who is the monster’s creator. In her story of how Victor Frankenstein creates the monster and what he does after the monster comes to life, Shelley conveys several timeless messages about the dangers of science, the dangers of isolation, and the importance of being a good parent. It is a novel that everyone should read.

In the story, Frankenstein, eager for glory, wants to discover the “elixir of life” so that he can have the power to bring the dead back to life. He wants to create a new race of superhuman beings and wants them to worship him like a god. He wants to unlock the secrets of nature and use that power for his own selfish goals. Shelley’s novel warns us that we must be careful what we do with science—how we apply the knowledge we discover. For when Frankenstein does discover the “elixir of life,” and when he does create a superhuman being, he creates a creature that is beyond his control. The creature is more powerful and more intelligent than Victor Frankenstein, and the creature engineers Frankenstein’s demise.

Shelley’s novel also warns us about the dangers of isolation. Frankenstein’s creation is so revolting and dangerous in part because Frankenstein works completely alone. He becomes so absorbed with his project that he completely blocks out family and friends. He stops communicating with others and works secretly; he does not consult others about his project, partly because he knows that what he is doing is wrong, partly because he wants all the glory. But because he does not work with others, because he loses touch with his community of family and friends, he also loses touch with his responsibility to other human beings. When the creature comes to life, Frankenstein runs away, abandoning his creation even though he knows the creature might harm others.

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This abandonment brings us to the novel's third timeless message: the importance of being a good parent. Frankenstein creates a living being and then abandons him because he is an "ugly wretch." He totally ignores his responsibility to the creature, who is born as innocent as a child, even though he is the size of a giant. The creature is abhorred by everyone he meets, and because no one has ever shown him love, he learns to hate. And the person he comes to hate most is the father who abandoned him. Shelley's message is clear: you are responsible for what you create, and if you are a parent, you must love your child, whatever his or her appearance.

In our age of cloning and genetic engineering, of scattered communities and neighbors who don't know each other's names, of abandoned children and abusive parents, Shelley's book may have more importance than ever. It is also a powerful and suspense-filled tale. Will Frankenstein capture the creature? Will he create a "bride" for the monster? Will Walton, the ship captain who records Frankenstein's story, learn from Frankenstein's tale? Find out for yourself. Grab a copy of this amazing novel and enjoy.

Sample 4 Score

Frankenstein isn't who most people think he is, which is the monster. The *real* Frankenstein is the scientist who brings the monster to life. You'd know this if you read one of the greatest novels ever written, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, a book that I think everyone should read. This book is great because its suspenseful and teaches some important lessons, these lessons are maybe even more important to day than they were in Shelly's time. (Which was the 1800s.)

One lesson is about how to use science. Dr. Frankenstein in the story discovers how to bring a dead person back to life. But everything goes wrong after the creature wakes up. What was supposed to be a great thing that would bring Frankenstein all kinds of glory and make him like a master creator instead brought him and lots of other people all kinds of terrible horror. I think Mary is telling us to be very careful how we use science.

She also is telling us in this story to stay close to others. Frankenstein makes the creature all by himself. While he's working on the monster; he doesn't talk to anyone, no one in the university knows what on earth he's up to, he's got a big secret. He's so obsessed and he forgets to think about what will happen once this giant creature comes to life. He doesn't think about being responsible to and for the creature. Because he worked alone he forgot about that.

The third lesson is that we need to be good parents. Frankenstein is like the creature's father and mother. He created him, and he needs to take care

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of him. But he doesn't, he just runs away. That's when his horror begins, and the creature's, too. The poor creature is hated by everyone and his life is really sad.

Read this excellent book!

Sample 1 Score

Every school has required reading that all the kids are required to read for school. There are lots of different books on this list, I read some of them, some of them are good but I don't like them all.

One book that hard to read but I liked it, was, Frankenstein. The story of the monster. Frankenstein makes this monster out of dead body parts. Then he makes the monster come to life, through some secret way he doesn't tell anybody about. Then he runs away and gets attacked and becomes a killer because everyone hates him. Frankenstein, is a really good story.

- 37.** Some people think of the United States as a nation of “couch potatoes.” Write an essay persuading readers to be more physically active.

Sample 6 Score

Is your favorite place in the home sitting on the couch in front of the television? Do you spend hours and hours there each day, surrounded by bags of chips and cans of soda? Do you panic when you can't find the remote control and think that you might actually have to get up off of the sofa to change the channel?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, you are not alone. In fact, you are one of the millions of Americans who are “couch potatoes”: people who spend their days and nights “vegging out” in front of the “tube.”

Well, spud, it's time to get up out of that armchair and get some exercise!

I know how seductive television can be. I know how easy it is to plop onto the sofa and lose yourself in the world of sports, reality shows, and good-old make-believe. I know how mesmerizing MTV and other channels can be and how hard it can be to pull yourself away. But all that television spells disaster for your body because it needs to be active to be healthy. And it's no good for your mental health or social life, either.

Think about what all that time in front of the television is doing to your body. Think about what all that sagging muscle and growing belly is doing to your life. Think about how your lack of energy affects you at work.

Now think about how different things would be if you spent some of that

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TV time getting exercise instead: You would feel better during the day. You would sleep better at night. You would have more energy. You would look better. You would have more confidence. You would be more creative. You would be healthier and happier. And you would not even miss the television.

What sort of exercise can you do? *Anything!* Go for a walk. Ride a bike. Jog. Lift weights. Take an aerobics class. Do yoga. Join a basketball or hockey league. Swim. Roller blade. Grab a friend, a fellow couch potato, and exercise together.

You can start with just fifteen minutes a day, two or three days a week, and build up slowly. Before you know it, your couch potato days will be over, and you will wonder how on earth you ever spent so much time in front of the TV.

Sample 4 Score

Americans everywhere are “couch potatoes.” These are people who just sit in front of the TV all day and night. They spend so much time on the couch they’re almost becoming part of the couch. They don’t ever want to get up to change the channel, so the remote control is like a part of their hand. Is that what you’re like? Do you spend too much time in front of the TV? Well, it’s time to stop being a couch potato. You need to take care of your body. It’s time for you to get up and get some exercise.

If you lay around all day, think of how that’s just not good for you. It’s not healthy. You need to get exercise to be healthy. Physical activity at least three times a week will get you back in shape. It will help you have a healthy heart, better sleep, and less likely to get sick and diseases because your immune system will be stronger. Furthermore, you’ll have more energy and just feel better. This is especially good for you at work. In addition, you’ll be more confident because you will look better and fit into nicer clothes. When you feel better about yourself, you’re happier.

It’s easy to get exercise. You can do some jumping jacks or jog or play tennis. Even just walking to the store instead of driving can help. Maybe you could join a gym or a sports team, like a basketball team in your neighborhood. Or ask a friend whose also a couch potato to exercise with you. It’s easier when you have someone to exercise with.

So do yourself a favor, stop spending so much time in front of the TV! You’ll be proud when your days as a couch potato are over.

Sample 1 Score

For some people’s thinking, there are too many “couch potatoes”, all across the American country. There are lying on their couches all the time, doing

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nothing. Except watching the TV all the time. Whereas they not getting any excersizing, not anything at all. Theres so much to do, like jogging or walking or tennis instead.

The couch potatos, they should not be just on the couch, but also excersizing. Think about being this like a potato. Is not a good thing! Instead, to be like a lion or strong like a bull.

- 40.** Nowadays, the private life of a politician is hardly private. In your opinion, should we be so concerned with the private affairs of a politician or political candidate? State your position and support it with specific reasons and examples.

Sample 6 Score

When you think of former president Bill Clinton, what's the first thing that comes to mind? Unfortunately, for many people, the first thing they think of is Monica Lewinsky. Like millions of people around the globe, I was horrified by how much the investigation delved into Mr. Clinton's private affairs. No one needed to know the sort of details that were revealed by Ken Starr's investigation. But while I don't want to know the details, I do believe we have a right to know what sort of lives our politicians are living. I believe their behavior in private is a reflection of their true values and how they will behave in office.

For example, if a politician lies to his or her spouse (I'm talking about big lies, like infidelity, not little white lies), that tells us something about his or her character. In my opinion, this person is not to be trusted. I wouldn't have faith that this politician would keep his or her word. True, the relationship between a husband and wife is very different from that between a politician and his or her constituents. But the politician's respect for that relationship and how he or she deals with any problems in that relationship reflects his or her level of integrity.

Similarly, if a politician (or political candidate) behaves in an illegal manner, that shows a disrespect for the law. A government official who employs an illegal resident as a nanny or housekeeper, for example, or pays a nanny or housekeeper under the table to avoid taxes is acting as if he or she is above the law—or demonstrating that he or she simply doesn't care about the law. This is not the kind of person I want in a public office.

On the other hand, if a politician leads a respectable, law-abiding life at home, we can expect a respectable, law-abiding performance in office. A politician who deals honestly with family, friends, and business associates is likely to deal honestly with his or her constituents as well. A politician who

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respects the law in all aspects of his or her private life is likely to respect the law while in office, too. A candidate who behaves in a cautious, reserved manner regarding his or her personal affairs is likely to bring a similar approach to the office.

I know that nobody is perfect and that every politician may have skeletons in the closet. I'm not talking about transgressions from the distant past. But I am concerned with a politician's recent past and current behavior. Is he or she honest or does he or she break promises? Does he or she behave recklessly or in a thoughtful and controlled manner? We cannot separate who we are personally from who we are professionally. That is why I believe the public has a right to know.

Sample 4 Score

Politicians live very public lives. If their big politicians (like the president, for example), they don't really have any privacy. Everybody knows everything they do. This probably bothers some people, however, I actually think that is a very good thing. I think we need to know what politicians are really like. How they are at home (in private) tells us about how they will be in the office.

It's true that we are different at home and in the office. However, we're still the same person. In other words, we will pretty much act the same, on the same values and principals, whether we're at home or in the office. If we would steal or lie at home, we would probably steal or lie in the office. So, if a politician lies to his wife, for example, or to her business partners, then we can probably expect them to lie to the people who elected them.

On the contrary, if a politician lives an honest life and always obeys the law. We can probably expect them to behave honestly and lawfully when they are in office. Because like I started to say before, you can't separate home and work. We're the same person in both places.

So, in conclusion, it's a good idea to have knowledge about politician's private affairs. They probably don't like it and want things to be private. However, since they are our elected officials, they have to be public, unfortunately for them about almost everything.

Sample 1 Score

The politicians, they have privacy in there homes. For them too much is knowed about everything what they is doing. This is bad; for them. Whereas, knowing the public are a very good thing for us. If lying and stealing there, also here. Don't you agree? It is clear. If they are a liar at home,

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we will be lying to also. So therefore, in my opinion, “we should be so concerned with the private affairs of a politician or political candidate.”

- 41.** Today’s top professional athletes often have salaries and bonuses in the tens of millions of dollars. Do you think these athletes deserve such high compensation? Why or why not? Explain your position and use specific reasons and examples.

Sample 6 Score

When he was at the height of his basketball career, Michael Jordan was making approximately \$300,000 *per game*. That’s more than most people make in a year; indeed, it’s more than some people earn in a lifetime. Yes, Michael Jordan was a phenomenal basketball player. Yes, he was also a fantastic role model. But no, he did not deserve to earn such a ridiculously high salary. Jordan, like many other top professional athletes, was grossly overpaid.

Why do top athletes earn such inflated salaries? Because they bring big bucks into their cities and franchises. But what sort of service do they provide to society? Do they save lives? No. Do they improve the standard of living or promote positive social change? No. Do they help keep our streets safe or educate our kids? No. True, many of the top athletes are good role models for our children. But seven-figure salaries don’t always mean model behavior. Take N.B.A. star Latrell Spreewell, for example, who choked and threatened to kill his coach.

It is true that professional athletes work hard, and many have spent their lives pursuing their goals. It is also true that most professional athletes have a relatively short career span—a decade perhaps at the top of their game. Limited as their professional sporting career may be, they don’t deserve such high salaries. After their professional sports careers are over, they can certainly pursue other careers and work “regular” jobs like the rest of us. Ending their stint as professional athletes doesn’t mean they have to stop earning incomes. They just have to earn incomes in a different way. Why should they be any different from the rest of us who may need to switch careers?

It is also true that professional athletes may be injured while on the job; their work is indeed physical, and especially in contact sports like football, injuries are bound to happen. But, like the rest of us, they have insurance, and in nearly all cases, their exorbitant salaries more than cover their medical costs. And theirs is not the only high-risk job. What about miners, con-

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struction workers, or firefighters? They are at risk for physical injury every day, too—injuries that could likewise end their careers. But they sure aren't earning millions of dollars a year.

It is also true that professional athletes may spend years and years practicing with farm teams for a fraction of the salary they receive once they make it to the top. But in every career path, we start off with lower wages and must pay our dues and work our way up. Besides, farm team salaries are not always so low.

We're a sports-crazy country, a nation of fanatic sports fans and celebrity worshippers. We're awed and entertained by the best of them—the Michael Jordans, the Alex Rodriguezes, the Emmitt Smiths. But as much as they may inspire and amuse us, professional athletes do not deserve such high salaries. Those millions could be much more wisely spent.

Sample 4 Score

Do athletes get paid too much? You bet. That's my opinion.

Professional athletes, what do they do with all that money? Imagine Michael Jordan earning \$300,000 per game! Plus all his money from Nike and other advertising. I think that money can be put to much better use in this country.

Professional athletes should get good salaries, but not the millions like they get now. It's just too much. Their job isn't dangerous, except maybe for football or ice hockey where it's easy to get a bad injury. It's easy to get a bad injury in lots of other jobs, too, like construction, but they don't get millions of dollars. I guess, the difference is that nobody likes to watch construction workers. There's fun in the game and people like the competition, sports teams bring lots of money into a city's economy.

If professional athletes could guarantee they'd also be a good role model for kids, then maybe they could have such high salaries. Because they'd be doing something good for society since so many kids are watching. For now though, it's too much.

Sample 1 Score

Today the athletes so much money. Millions an millions of the dollars. They playing baseball, basketball; football, even for golf. This is the not of the dangerous sport, even less than many of the others.

The money, it's too much, giving mine opinion. For the teams and the cities its so much there's else to pay for with the money, like homelessness. This is the need to be changed.

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- 55.** Is reading fiction a waste of time? Why or why not? Explain your answer using specific reasons and examples to support your position.

Sample 6 Score

Remember the last book that captured your imagination, that transported you to another place and time? Remember a book that made you fall in love with its characters, made you feel their pain and joy? Remember a story that taught you an important lesson, that helped you better understand others, make sense of the human condition? If so, then you can understand why the question, “Is reading fiction a waste of time?” is such a silly question.

Fiction, unlike a user manual, a magazine article, or newspaper editorial, probably won't offer you any practical knowledge that you can put to immediate use. It won't inform you of current events or give you advice on how to cultivate a better garden. It probably won't help you decide which candidate to vote for or which product to buy. But that certainly doesn't mean it's useless or impractical. Indeed, fiction serves three important functions for human beings: It helps us be more compassionate to others, it helps us better understand ourselves, and it cultivates our imaginations. It can also teach us about history, psychology, even biology and other sciences.

Compassion for others is rooted in understanding and acceptance, and a good story brings us into the inner world of its characters so that we can understand them. In Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye*, for example, Morrison peels away the layers of her characters' histories piece by piece like an onion until we see into their core and understand what drives them. They may still do awful things to each other, but she shows us *why* they do the things that they do, and we learn that we shouldn't judge others until we understand their pasts. Their stories are sad and painful, and we learn to love even the outcast Pecola. In fact, we learn that those outcasts are the ones who need our love the most.

Many stories and novels also help us better understand ourselves. Joseph Conrad's dark and powerful novel *Heart of Darkness* helps us see that all of us have a dark side, and that we need to acknowledge this dark side in order to control it. It makes us question just how civilized we are and indeed what it means to be civilized in the first place.

Good fiction also cultivates our imagination, which is more important to us than some might think. Without imagination, we live a sad, empty life. Imagination is central to our emotional health and is a key factor in our level of intelligence. Facts are one thing; but facts can be of no real use unless coupled with imagination. Fiction can help us by keeping our imag-

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ination fresh and active. In a story like Franz Kafka’s “Metamorphosis,” for example, we are asked to imagine that Gregor, the main character, wakes up one morning and has turned into a giant bug. Crazy? Perhaps. But once we accept this premise and imagine Gregor as a five-foot long cockroach, we can feel his family’s horror and imagine his agony as he finds himself trapped in his room and abandoned by those he loves.

Is reading fiction a waste of time? That’s like asking if laughing is a waste of time. We don’t need fiction to survive, but we do need it to be kinder, more understanding, and more creative human beings.

Sample 4 Score

Is reading fiction a waste of time? I am surprised by this question. I never thought of it as a waste of time. I understand that it is not practical like reading a “how-to” article or something like that. However, on the other hand, it is good for you. I think it helps you have a good imagination and be a better person.

I think fiction helps you be a better person because it helps you understand people. Lots of stories help you understand why people do what they do. For example, in *The Bluest Eye*, at the end of the story we understand why the people do the things that they do. We judge the characters right away but then we learn about them and maybe change our judgment. The book was written by Toni Morrison.

Second, I think fiction also helps you understand yourself. Some stories help us see that we all have a good side and a dark side within. Fiction can also help us have a good imagination, and this is important in helping us be creative. Being creative can help you better solve problems and think of original things.

I love reading fiction, and I never think it is a waste of time. It may not be practical, like reading the newspaper, however it is a lot more fun and helps me be a better person.

Sample 1 Score

Is reading fiction a waste of time? is a question. How is the answer? Like you and me, wondering, is fun things a waste of time too, or only do the practical what you should? These be important questions. What the answer?

In my opinion, no way, Jose! It fun to read fiction stories. Its like imagination, cool things.

So don’t beleive it. Say who! Reading fiction ain’t wasting time. In my opinion.

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- 58.** Some people think that school cafeterias should be required to provide low-fat and/or vegetarian lunch options to accommodate the eating habits of all students. Do you agree or disagree? Explain your position and use specific reasons and examples as support.

Sample 6 Score

It's a fact: There are students across the United States who are vegetarian and/or health conscious, and school cafeterias should be required to provide low-fat and/or vegetarian lunch options for them. Even more importantly, many teenagers' dietary decisions are not only based on health concerns but also religious and/or moral issues. In this day and age, an individual's eating habits often reflect his or her identity. For these reasons, it's imperative that each school's cafeteria menu be as diverse as its student body.

Just by reading headlines in any of the major news magazines, it becomes clear that the United States is a nation that needs to slim down. In every town and city, there are an abundance of fast food restaurants that lure teenage customers with fast, inexpensive, and tasty food, but these foods are typically unhealthy. Unfortunately, school cafeterias, in an effort to provide food that is appetizing to young people, mimic fast food menus, often serving items such as burgers and fries, pizza, hot dogs, and fried chicken. While these foods do provide some nutritional value, they are relatively high in fat, and many of them, namely burgers, hot dogs, and fried chicken, are clearly not designed for vegetarians.

Many of the lunch selections currently offered by most school cafeterias could be made vegetarian and/or more healthy with a few simple and inexpensive substitutions. Veggie burgers, for example, offered alongside beef burgers, would give both vegetarians and the health conscious more options. A salad bar would also serve the dual purpose of providing both vegetarians and low-fat food eaters the opportunity for a satisfying meal. This is not to say that accommodating every desire or food preference is plausible, but students should have the right to be served foods that coincide with their life choices.

Sample 4 Score

In the United States there are many people who are vegetarian. In addition, there are people who choose to eat low-fat foods, either to lose weight or to stay healthy. Many of these people are students who eat lunch at their

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school cafeterias on a daily basis. Surprisingly though, school cafeterias are not required to provide low-fat nor vegetarian options for students.

Unfortunately, vegetarian options may be limited to the french fries (served with burgers) or pizza. While these are vegetarian (non-meat) options, they do not necessarily serve as low-fat foods. I think schools should have a wider variety of low-fat and/or vegetarian options such as a salad bar, or perhaps even something with tofu.

While cafeterias can't meet all the demands of students, it is important to offer those committed to a healthy or vegetarian lifestyle the choice. Schools should create a menu that offers these options for all students.

Sample 1 Score

Lot's of people are overwait and even fat, and the other people are vegetaran who dont eat meat. The food at schools are bad enouf and then why should they hafe to have stuff that those people like. School's shoudl have good food and meat, but not fat food for everyone.

- 77.** Many people feel that the use of surveillance cameras in public places such as parking lots is a good idea that can help ensure our safety. Others worry that too many cameras violate our right to privacy and give law enforcement officials too much power. In your opinion, should we install more surveillance cameras in public places? Why or why not? Support your position with specific reasons and examples.

Sample 6 Score

Not long ago, the nation was gripped by the horrifying news that a baby had been stolen from a car in a parking lot while her mother, who was returning a shopping cart, was just a few feet away. Thanks to the description of the kidnapper captured by surveillance cameras in the parking lot and broadcast over radios, television, and highway overpass signs, the kidnapper was quickly caught and the baby returned, unharmed, to her mother. Had it not been for those surveillance cameras, that mother would probably never have seen her baby girl again.

I can't think of a much better argument for the use of surveillance cameras in public places. That baby's life was saved by those parking lot cameras.

Many people worry about the use of surveillance cameras in public places such as parking lots, stores, parks, and roadways. They don't like the idea that they are being watched. They worry that the information captured on

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the surveillance tapes can somehow be used against them. But how? It seems to me that the only reason we should worry about being caught on surveillance cameras is if we are doing something wrong. If we are behaving lawfully in a public place, then why worry if it is captured on film?

Surveillance cameras can provide two immensely important services. One, they can help us find those who commit crimes, including thieves, kidnapers, vandalizers, and even murderers. Two, they can serve as a powerful deterrent to crime. A thief who plans to steal a car may think twice if he knows he will be caught on video. A woman who hopes to kidnap a child may abandon her plans if she knows she will be captured on film.

Surveillance cameras can also help us in less critical but nonetheless practical ways. In some towns in England, for example, radio deejays use information from surveillance cameras to announce the availability of parking spaces in crowded public parking lots. Problems of all shapes and sizes can also be noted and addressed through video surveillance. For example, imagine a video camera installed in a local town square. Reviewing the films, officials might realize that people who meet in the square move quickly into the shade of the one tree in the center of the square. This could move officials to plant more trees or provide tables with umbrellas so that people could meet and relax in the shade. Similarly, a video camera in a grocery store might reveal that Isle 7 is always overcrowded, prompting the manager to re-arrange items to more evenly distribute shoppers.

Of course it's possible to have too much of a good thing, and if surveillance cameras cross the line and start being installed on private property—that is, in our offices and homes—then we will have the “Big Brother is watching” scenario opponents fear. If that were the case, I would be against surveillance cameras, too. But as long as surveillance cameras are limited to public places, they can help ensure our safety.

Sample 4 Score

Many public places now have surveillance cameras, the main reason being to ensure safety. I think this is a good idea, and that more places should have them.

Surveillance cameras are a good thing because they help keep us safe. If people know they might be on video then, they probably won't do something bad or against the law, like stealing. This is a big protection for us. It makes me feel safer, especially like in a parking lot in the night time. The other good thing about surveillance cameras, is that they can help us catch someone who does do something bad. For example, stealing a car in a park-

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ing lot. The camera can get a good picture of the thief and the police will have a good description of the person who stole the car. That makes it a lot easier to catch the thief.

I think surveillance cameras can also be used for other good things, like helping fix traffic jams in grocery stores. I mean if you can see that people are always crowding in one aisle, for example.

I know that some people are upset about this kind of thing (being on film) and think that it's like "Big Brother is watching," or something. Also, some people just don't like being on cameras. However, if you're not doing anything wrong, it shouldn't matter. Their only for finding people who do things wrong. To me, I think that makes a lot of sense.

Sample 1 Score

In my opinion, should we install more surveillance cameras in public places? I think, "yes," is a good idea. Why or why not? In my opinion, it is for making ensured the safety in places such as parking lots. This is what our right to privacy can do and tell the law enforcement officials and government too.

- 95.** Alexander Smith said, "The great man is the man who does a thing for the first time." Do you agree with this definition of greatness? Why or why not?

Sample 6 Score

Just as there are many definitions of success, there are also many definitions of greatness. Alexander Smith said that a great person is someone who does a thing for the first time. He's right, and the list of those great people is long and includes the likes of Neil Armstrong, Jackie Robinson, and Thomas Edison. But Smith's definition isn't broad enough to include many other people who I believe are also great. In my opinion, greatness can also be attained by doing something to improve the lives of others.

Mother Teresa is the first person to come to mind under this broadened definition. Mother Teresa, who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, dedicated her life to helping the poor, the sick, and the hungry. She left her homeland of Yugoslavia to work with the impoverished people of India, where she selflessly served others for almost 70 years. She became a nun and founded the Missionaries of Charity sisterhood and the House for the Dying. She embraced those that many in society chose to disdain and ignore: the crippled and diseased, the homeless and helpless. She gave them food, shelter, medical care, and the compassion that so many others denied

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them. She was certainly not the first to dedicate her life to the care of others, but she was certainly a great woman.

Another great person who also won a Nobel Peace Prize was Dr. Albert Schweitzer, a German doctor who, like Mother Teresa, also selflessly served the poor and sick. Schweitzer dedicated himself to the people of Africa. There, he built a hospital and a leper colony, a refuge for those who had been rejected by society. Again, he was not the first to offer care and comfort for the sick and suffering. But he certainly was great.

Harriet Tubman is also clearly a great woman. She led hundreds of American slaves to freedom along the underground railroad, risking her life over and over again to bring her fellow slaves to freedom. She gave them the greatest gift one can offer: freedom to live a better way of life. She wasn't the first to escape, and she wasn't the first to go back for others. But she was the one who kept going back. She knew that each time she returned for another, she was risking her life. But like Mother Teresa and Dr. Schweitzer, Harriet Tubman was utterly dedicated to improving the life of others.

Greatness comes in many forms, and we are lucky to have many examples of greatness upon which to model our lives. Some great people are those who were able to be the first to accomplish something marvelous. Others, like Mother Teresa, Albert Schweitzer, and Harriet Tubman, are great because they worked tirelessly to ease the suffering of their fellow human beings.

Sample 4 Score

According to Alexander Smith, "The great man is the man who does a thing for the first time." In my opinion, this is a good definition, but it is also too narrow. By that I mean that it is not broad enough to include lots of other people that I believe are great. There are many people who didn't necessarily do anything for the first time who have done great things.

One example was Mother Teresa. Another is Albert Schweitzer, and a third is Harriet Tubman.

Albert Schweitzer opened up a hospital and leper colony in Africa to take care of the sick and abandoned people who had no money or access to health care. This was a great thing. Without his hospital, people would die or suffer and be outcast by society.

Harriet Tubman is famous for being a woman who kept going back to the South to free slaves. She led them through the "underground railroad" and brought them to freedom. She wasn't the first to escape or help others escape, but she was great because she kept doing it and kept helping others.

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Finally, Mother Teresa helped so many people. She went to India and opened up a place for the sick and the dying to be taken care of. She helped to feed and comfort hungry and sick people, thousands of them. She is what it means, to be compassionate towards others.

All three of these people and lots of others like them are great for what they did to help others.

Sample 1 Score

What does it mean, to be great. Alexander Smith say that “The great man is the man who does a thing for the first time.” I know a lot of great men, the list can be long: George Washington, Robert Kennedy, Mother Teresa, Harriet Tubman, Beethoven, Jackie Robinson, Reggie Jackson (I like baseball), Martin Luther King, and etc. the list goes on and on.

To be great is not an easy thing. Having to do something for the first time, or doing something else that is great. You can be leading others or helping them. In fact not everyone who does this is great.

- 107.** Should people lease or buy new cars? Make a case for the option that you think is best. Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.

Sample 6 Score

Planning to lease a car because you don't think you can afford to buy? Think again. Leasing can end up being just as expensive as buying—and you don't even get to keep the car. Even if you decide to buy the car at the end of your lease, you may end up paying considerably more money than if you'd decided to buy from the beginning.

Most people who are thinking about leasing are attracted to this option because they believe it will cost them less money. And they're right—it is cheaper, but only in the short term. For example, if you were to lease a 2002 Subaru Forester, with \$2,500 down, you might pay \$250 per month for the car. If you were to buy the same car, with \$2,500 down, you would pay closer to \$350 per month. Over a three-year lease, that's \$3,600—a big savings. But after your lease is over, you have to give the car back. If you want to keep driving, you'll either have to put another down-payment on another lease, or, if you have the option to buy the car, you'll have to pay thousands of dollars to purchase the vehicle—dollars that won't be spread out in more manageable monthly payments.

Many people want to lease because they can then drive a nicer car than

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they might otherwise be able to afford. For example, if your monthly budget allowed you to spend \$250 on your car, you might be able to lease a brand new Ford Explorer. For the same price, you might have to buy an Explorer that was two or three years old with 50,000 miles, or buy a new but considerably less expensive make and model. A lease therefore allows you to drive in the latest models of more expensive cars. But when your lease is over, you will have to return that Explorer. Whatever car you can afford to buy, you get to keep it, and it will always have a resell or trade-in value if you wanted to later upgrade to a newer car.

Furthermore, people who lease cars are often shocked by how much they must pay when the lease is over. Most leases limit you to a certain number of miles, and if you go over that allotment, you must pay for each mile. As a result, at the end of your lease, you may end up paying thousands of dollars in mileage fees. For example, if your lease covers you for 25,000 miles over three years, but you drive 40,000, that's an extra 15,000 miles. At \$.11 per mile, that's \$1,650 you'll have to pay. And you still won't have a car.

In addition, when you lease, you still have to pay for regular maintenance and repairs to the vehicle. Since you must return the car when your lease expires, you are paying to repair *someone else's car*. If you own the car, however, you would know that every dollar you spend maintaining or repairing the car is an investment in a real piece of property—your property, not someone else's.

By now, the benefits of buying over leasing should be clear. But if you're still not convinced, remember this fundamental fact: If you lease, when your lease is up, after you've made all of your monthly payments, paid for extra mileage, and paid for repairs, *you must give the car back*. It isn't yours to keep, no matter how much the lease cost you. Whatever make or model you can afford to buy, it is yours to keep after you make your payments. There's no giving it back, and that makes all the difference.

Sample 4 Score

When you need a car, you can lease, or buy it. A lot of people think leasing is better, than buying. I think it makes more sense to buy. It really actually costs less money in the long run.

With a lease you can pay less each month for a car. If you buy it you'd probably have to pay a lot more each month, like a hundred dollars more a month. But the good thing about buying is you get to keep the car. With a lease of course, you have to give the car back.

With a lease you also have to pay for the extra miles you put on the car.

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You are only allowed to put so many miles on the car and if you go over that, you have to pay for each mile. That can add up to thousands of dollars even though its only a few sense for each mile.

You will also need to pay for any repairs on the car just like you would if you owned it, which you don't, because you still have to give it back. When you owne the car, you still have to pay for repairs, but, it's your car. Leasing feels like throwing money away.

Sample 1 Score

Lot of people they buy car, so many others they leasing. Leasing mean pay money each month and then giving the car back. Leasing can be for one year or two even three or four. Most any car, you can lease it. Any car you can buy, too, new one or use one.

Leasing sometime you pay fewer monies because you don't keep the car. Buying sometime it cost more but you keep the car. Down paying can be a lot of money and hard to save.

Buying or leasing, is up to you. Which works for you.

- 108.** The inventor and statesman Benjamin Franklin said, “Money never made a man happy yet, nor will it. There is nothing in its nature to produce happiness.” Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.

Sample 6 Score

Benjamin Franklin is one of the greatest figures in American history, and I have a great deal of respect for this incredible inventor, politician, and writer. But I must respectfully disagree with his claim that, “Money never made a man happy yet, nor will it. There is nothing in its nature to produce happiness.” I agree that money in and of itself does not make a person happy; but I believe that money can help provide one thing that is essential to happiness: good health.

While money can do nothing to change our genetic makeup and our physiological predisposition to illness and disease, it *can* give us access to better healthcare throughout our lives. This begins with prenatal care and childhood vaccinations. In impoverished third-world countries, infant mortality rates are three, four, even ten times higher than in the United States, and as many as one in four women still die in childbirth because they do not have access to modern medical care. Sadly, people who are too poor to

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afford vaccinations and routine healthcare for their children watch helplessly as many of those children succumb to illnesses and diseases that are rarely fatal here in the United States.

Money also enables us to afford better doctors and see specialists throughout our lives. If your child has difficulty hearing, for example, and you have insurance (which costs money) or cash, you can see a hearing specialist and pay for therapy. If you have migraines that make you miserable, you can see a headache specialist and afford medication and treatment. Having money also means being able to afford preventative measures, such as taking vitamins and getting regular check-ups. It means being able to afford products and services that can enhance our health, such as gym memberships, organic foods, and acupuncture.

Another important thing money can do is enable us to live in a healthy environment. Many of the world's poorest people live in dirty, dangerous places—unsanitary slums crawling with diseases and health hazards of all sorts. In a particularly poor area of the Bronx, for example, children had an abnormally high rate of asthma because their families couldn't afford to move away from the medical waste treatment plant that was poisoning the air.

Money can also help us be healthy by enabling us to afford proper heating and cooling measures. This includes being able to afford a warm winter coat and the opportunity to cool off at a pool or in the ocean. On a more basic level, it means being able to afford heat in the winter and air conditioning in the summer. During heat waves, victims of heat stroke are often those who are too poor to afford air conditioning in their apartments. In extreme cold, the same is true: people who freeze to death or become gravely ill from the cold are often those who are unable to afford high heating bills.

Having money may not make people happy, but it sure goes a long way toward keeping them healthy. And as they say, if you haven't got your health, you haven't got anything.

Sample 4 Score

Benjamin Franklin once said that “Money never made a man happy yet, nor will it. There is nothing in its nature to produce happiness.” I do not agree with this statement because money can buy access to good health care. In my opinion, good health is essential to happiness. Therefore, money can make you happy by keeping you healthy.

Money first of all can get you access to good doctors, even specialists if you need them. With money, you can afford all kinds of things, like tests