

Lu Hoover
01/28/2014

Test Assessing Secondary Completion™ – Sample Items, Writing

Essay Prompt

There is an ongoing debate in the public domain as to whether or not our society has progressed in significant ways on the issue of race. Specifically, has the twentieth century shown major progress for equality in our society? Is it fair to say that we have progressed significantly on issues of race? Or has an inequitable society simply changed forms?

Weigh the claims on both sides, and then write an argumentative essay supporting either side of the debate in which you argue for or against the free library system. Be sure to use information from both texts in your argumentative essay.

Before you begin planning and writing, read the two texts:

1. President Obama's Speech
2. selection from *The New Jim Crow*

As you read the texts, think about what details from the texts you might use in your argumentative essay. You may take notes or highlight the details as you read.

After reading the texts, create a plan for your argumentative essay. Think about ideas, facts, definitions, details, and other information and examples you want to use. Think about how you will introduce your topic and what the main topic will be for each paragraph.

Now write your argumentative essay. Be sure to:

- Introduce your claim.
- Support your claim with logical reasoning and relevant evidence from the passages.

Passage 1

Excerpt from Barack Obama, Inaugural Speech, 2008.

I am the son of a black man from Kenya and a white woman from Kansas. I was raised with the help of a white grandfather who survived a Depression to serve in Patton's Army during World War II and a white grandmother who worked on a bomber assembly line at Fort Leavenworth while he was overseas. I've gone to some of the best schools in America and lived in one of the world's poorest nations. I am married to a black American who carries within her the blood of slaves and slaveowners - an inheritance we pass on to our two precious daughters. I have brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, uncles and cousins, of every race and every hue, scattered across three continents, and for as long as I live, I will never forget that in no other country on Earth is my story even possible.

It's a story that hasn't made me the most conventional candidate. But it is a story that has seared into my genetic makeup the idea that this nation is more than the sum of its parts - that out of many, we are truly one...

Throughout the first year of this campaign, against all predictions to the contrary, we saw how hungry the American people were for this message of unity. Despite the temptation to view my candidacy through a purely racial lens, we won commanding victories in states with some of the whitest populations in the country. In South Carolina, where the Confederate Flag still flies, we built a powerful coalition of African Americans and white Americans.

What's remarkable is not how many failed in the face of discrimination, but rather how many men and women overcame the odds; how many were able to make a way out of no way for those like me who would come after them. This union may never be perfect, but generation after generation has shown that it can always be perfected. And today, whenever I find myself feeling doubtful or cynical about this possibility, what gives me the most hope is the next generation - the young people whose attitudes and beliefs and openness to change have already made history in this election.

Passage 2

Excerpt from Michelle Alexander's The New Jim Crow.

More African Americans are under the control of the criminal justice system today – in prison or jail, on probation or parole – than were enslaved in 1850. Discrimination in housing, education, employment, and voting rights, which many Americans thought was wiped out by the civil rights laws of the 1960s, is now perfectly legal against anyone labeled a “felon.” Since many more people of color than whites are made felons by the entire system of mass incarceration, racial discrimination remains as powerful as it was under slavery or under the post-slavery era of Jim Crow segregation.

Mass incarceration today serves the same purpose as pre-Civil War slavery and the post-Civil War Jim Crow laws: to maintain a racial caste system. Jim Crow and slavery were caste systems, and our current system of mass incarceration is also a caste system: “The New Jim Crow.”

The original Jim Crow laws, after slavery ended, promoted racial discrimination in public housing, employment, voting, and education. The powerful Civil Rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s seemingly ended the Jim Crow era by winning the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. This racial caste system has not ended; it has simply been redesigned.

The criminal justice system functions as a new system of racial control by targeting black men through the “War on Drugs.” The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986, for example, included far more severe punishment for distribution of crack (associated with blacks) than powder cocaine (associated with whites). Civil penalties, such as not being able to live in public housing and not being able to get student loans, have been added to the already harsh prison sentences. Today a criminal freed from prison has scarcely more rights, and arguably less respect, than a freed slave or a black person living ‘free’ in Mississippi in the height of Jim Crow.

Writing

This sample writing prompt is tightly aligned to the spirit and expectations of the CCSS, for it is a text-based prompt as opposed to the stand-alone prompts used in past writing assessments. For this sample, students must write an argumentative essay either for keeping libraries free or charging a fee, and they must support their claim using details and examples from the two texts associated with the prompt. Students have the opportunity to provide evidence that they can integrate the diverse expectations of the CCSS: reading critically, writing fluently, and using language effectively.⁸

Test Assessing Secondary Completion™ – Sample Items, Writing

- Acknowledge and address alternate or opposing claims.
- Organize the reasons and evidence logically.
- Use words, phrases, and clauses to connect your ideas and to clarify the relationships among claims, counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
- Establish and maintain a formal style.
- Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

Test Assessing Secondary Completion™ – Sample Items, Writing

Essay Prompt

There is an ongoing debate in the medical community about whether or not antibacterial cleansers should be used by the public. Doctors in the early 20th century discovered the benefit of antibiotics to treat bacterial illnesses; however some now say the use of antibiotics are too extreme and have negative long term effects. Should the use of antibacterial cleaners be used by the masses or are they created more harm than good?

Weigh the claims on both sides, and then write an argumentative essay supporting either side of the debate in which you argue for or against the use of antibiotic cleaners. Be sure to use information from both texts in your argumentative essay.

Before you begin planning and writing, read the two texts:

1. The Pros of Antibacterial Cleansing Products
2. The Cons of Antibacterial Cleansing Products

As you read the texts, think about what details from the texts you might use in your argumentative essay. You may take notes or highlight the details as you read. After reading the texts, create a plan for your argumentative essay. Think about ideas, facts, definitions, details, and other information and examples you want to use. Think about how you will introduce your topic and what the main topic will be for each paragraph.

Now write your argumentative essay. Be sure to:

- Introduce your claim.
- Support your claim with logical reasoning and relevant evidence from the passages.

Writing

This sample writing prompt is tightly aligned to the spirit and expectations of the CCSS, for it is a text-based prompt as opposed to the stand-alone prompts used in past writing assessments. For this sample, students must write an argumentative essay either for keeping libraries free or charging a fee, and they must support their claim using details and examples from the two texts associated with the prompt. Students have the opportunity to provide evidence that they can integrate the diverse expectations of the CCSS: reading critically, writing fluently, and using language effectively.⁸

Test Assessing Secondary Completion™ – Sample Items, Writing

- Acknowledge and address alternate or opposing claims.
- Organize the reasons and evidence logically.
- Use words, phrases, and clauses to connect your ideas and to clarify the relationships among claims, counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
- Establish and maintain a formal style.
- Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

Pros of Using Antibacterial Cleaning Products

Antibacterial cleaning products can be very helpful in environments where people's immune systems are weak and susceptible to infection. For instance, hospitals often use antibacterial cleaning products to clean patients' rooms, exam rooms, and many other areas. This helps to prevent patients with weak immune systems from picking up bacteria that could worsen their condition. Senior citizen centers, doctor's offices, and public health clinics are other examples of places where antibacterial cleaning products are used. Convenience is another pro of antibacterial cleaning products. For example, if a person doesn't have access to soap and hot water, he or she can use a hand sanitizer as a quick way to kill bacteria on the hands. Generally, hand sanitizers are made in sizes that are convenient to carry along in a pocket or a purse. Antibacterial cleaning products are also useful in places like veterinarian's offices where lots of animals travel through an office in the span of a single day. By cleaning with these products, the staff can prevent the transference of bacteria from one pet to another. Cleaning an exam table in a vet's office with antibacterial cleaner after a sick dog was there would be one example. People can also use these products to clean a pet's area in their home. Many people use these products to clean the space where their pets eat and sleep.

- Antibacterial cleaning products are useful in healthcare settings where patients' immune systems are weak.
- Hand sanitizers are convenient to use when a person doesn't have access to soap and hot water.
- Antibacterial cleaning products are helpful for cleaning tasks in a veterinarian's office and within a home with pets.

Cons of Using Antibacterial Cleaning Products

One of the most significant cons of antibacterial cleaning products is the likelihood of a negative change in people's sanitary practices. For example, people who use hand sanitizer may not think that they need to wash their hands as often as people who don't use hand sanitizer. Hand sanitizer shouldn't be used as a substitute for hand-washing with hot water and soap. A thorough hand-washing regimen has been shown to be effective in removing bacteria and germs. Also, hand sanitizer can dry the skin causing cracking and risk of infection especially during the cold months of the year. The overuse of antibacterial soaps and other products can reduce the amount of healthy bacteria on a person's skin. There are some types of bacteria that protect a person against infections. These good or healthy bacteria die right along with the bad bacteria when antibacterial products are used too often in a household. Many parents use antibacterial cleaning products in the bathrooms and other rooms of their home in an effort to keep germs away from their children. Naturally, they don't want their children to contract germs and become sick. The parents who use these antibacterial cleaners on a regular basis do so with the best of intentions. But, a child who doesn't encounter enough bacteria and germs doesn't have a chance to build up immunity against them. Consequently, the child is more vulnerable when he or she begins school or goes to a place where bacteria are present in abundance. Finally, in some cases, antibacterial soaps are more expensive than non-bacterial types of soap. People who are on tight grocery budgets may not be able to afford all of the antibacterial cleaning products that they think they need for their household.

- Antibacterial soaps can kill both healthy and unhealthy types of bacteria on a person's skin.
- Antibacterial soaps can be more expensive than regular types of soap.
- Using hand sanitizer or antibacterial soap can cause people to cut down on the amount of hand-washing they do. This can lead to an increase in bacteria and germs

TASC Essay Prep

There is currently a debate in legislation around the sale, purchase, manufacture and use of cigarettes. Read the following two arguments. Then, write an argumentative essay, choosing one side.

Remember to include: (CAGE- Claim & Counterclaim; argument, grammar, evidence)

A thesis/argument

Counterclaim

Evidence- quotes from the text

Multiple paragraphs

Should cigarettes become illegal to sell and purchase?

Cons

1. The individual right to privacy should allow people to harm their own bodies with dangerous drugs, should they choose to do so.

While the government has the power to enact public smoking bans, there is no legitimate basis for laws restricting private smoking. We may as well pass laws prohibiting people from eating too much, or sleeping too little, or skipping medication, or taking on high-stress jobs.

Laws regulating personal conduct can be justified on three grounds:

The Harm Principle, which states that laws are justified if they prevent individuals from causing harm to others. For strict civil libertarians, this is the only legitimate basis of law. Examples of Harm Principle laws include the vast bulk of the criminal code--laws dealing with murder, robbery, assault, fraud, and so forth.

Morality Law, which prevent individuals from engaging in conduct that is offensive to the sensibilities of those in power, regardless of whether or not it harms others. Most Morality Law statutes have something to do with sex. Examples of Morality Laws include most obscenity laws, sodomy laws, and laws banning same-sex marriage.

Paternalism, which prevents individuals from engaging in conduct that is harmful to themselves. While Morality Law tends to be a conservative idea, the logic of Paternalism is generally more common among liberals. Examples of Paternalism laws include, well, laws regulating private drug use. The logic of Paternalism ("Stop or you'll go blind!") is also frequently used in conjunction with Morality Law to regulate sexual activities.

Every time a law is passed that is not based on the Harm Principle, our civil liberties are threatened--because the sole basis of government, as established in the Declaration of Independence, is to protect the rights of the individual citizen.