

TIMED ESSAYS

Directions: You will have 20 minutes to plan and write the essay assigned below. You are expected to express your thoughts carefully, naturally, and effectively. Be specific -- one concrete, pertinent example is worth a thousand words. Remember that how well you write is much more important than how much you write. *Do not write on a topic other than the one assigned below. An essay on a topic of your own choice will receive no credit.*

First, consider carefully the following statement. Then, read and follow the directions that are given in the assignment that follows the statement.

“We need more people who specialize in the impossible.”

Assignment: Do you agree or disagree with this quotation? Has attempting to do what other people have always thought impossible always led to gains for humanity? Write an essay in which you support your view with examples from literature, history, or observation.

Evaluating Timed Essay Questions

Essay can receive a ranking from 0 to 5, with 5 being the highest assessment possible. Essays are evaluated by the following criteria:

- _____ 1. **Legibility.** Is the essay readable?
- _____ 2. **Topic.** Does the essay address the topic assigned in an intelligent manner? Are all aspects of the topic covered proportionately?
- _____ 3. **Organization.** Does the essay have an introduction, body, and conclusion? Does the essay use effective transition words and phrases?
- _____ 4. **Development of Idea.** Does the essay use explicit example(s) to prove the writer’s opinion?
- _____ 5. **Grammar.** Are sentences complete sentences? Do subject and verb agree? Is pronoun reference clear?
- _____ 6. **Punctuation.** Do all sentences have correct end punctuation? Are commas used correctly? Are quotations used correctly?
- _____ 7. **Spelling.** Are there excessive misspelled words? Are those words which are misspelled of some difficulty or are they inexcusably simple words? Are simple homonyms misspelled?
- _____ 8. **Syntax.** Do sentences “flow” together in a pleasing manner? Does the essay include a variety of sentence structures?
- _____ 9. **Diction.** Are the words chosen used correctly? Is the vocabulary of the essay sophisticated enough for high school students? Are the best possible words used?
- _____ 10. **Completeness.** Is the essay finished?

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Sample Student Essay:

Only when one mind reaches into the void of unknown knowledge can the entire human race benefit. There have been drawbacks to this search's results, but on the whole it is beneficial. It is the only way to progress and continue our minds' expansion away from the lower animals.

When people specialize in the impossible, they can invent wonderful things. Edison's light bulb came from this process, and so did such everyday items as the radio and television. Also, advances in the medical field exist only because of people like Jonas Salk and his polio vaccine, and Louis Pasteur, whose method of purifying milk we use to this day. These things are so taken for granted that we forget the special people who brought the knowledge in from the realm of the "Unknown" and utilized it for practical use in our lives, and indeed that there was ever a time we did not know the concepts they discovered.

However, there are instances where the benefits our new knowledge can contain are questioned and debated. One foremost example is the use of the nuclear bomb. Einstein was a genius, it is true, but should we thank him for introducing a bomb that did away with thousands of people in an instant? And connected with that is the question of nuclear energy. Is it safe enough to use on a wide scale? Beside the worry over escaping radiation in melt-downs, what is a good way to dispose of waste without slowly destroying the land and sea? Is nuclear energy a benefit of progress or an ominous threat to our continued existence? Over questions like these, some may find it difficult to praise "progress."

In all, however, we do "need more people who specialize in the impossible" because it is only through those who experiment that we can learn more about ourselves and our environment. Maybe it is only a matter of learning enough to control our knowledge.

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First, consider carefully the following statement. Then, read and follow the directions that are given in the assignment that follows the statement.

“Some possessions, like a mink coat. A certain car or dog, or membership in a club, by seeming to confer upon their owners a particular status, influence the average person more than he realizes.”

Assignment: Choose one of those status symbols, or another that you think of, explain the reasons for its appeal, and show how that symbol has been a force for both good and evil.

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“Growing up requires the acceptance of limitation.”

Assignment: Do you agree or disagree with this statement? What evidence can you find in your own observation, reading and study to support your point of view? Be sure in your discussion to make clear your interpretation or definition of “limitations.”

TIMED ESSAYS: Topical Statements

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First, make certain that you understand the statement. Then, decide whether you agree or disagree with it. Support your position with specific examples from your reading, study, observation, or experiences.

1. "Adventure is not outside a man; it is within."
2. "Adversity makes men, and prosperity makes monsters."
3. "Any change for the better brings its own evil with it, and so one powerful consideration should always be in the back of our minds: if we release this good thing, what evil is likely to escape with it?"
4. "Boredom is an insult to oneself."
5. "Each of us assumes a personality to satisfy each group into which we enter; i.e., we do not act at home precisely as we act with the gang, in the classroom, or before an employer."
6. "Good judgment comes from experience, and experience comes from bad judgment."
7. "Life is a tragedy for those who feel, and a comedy for those who think."
8. "Man is a make-believe animal: he is never so truly himself as when he is acting a part."
9. "Most ignorance is vincible ignorance. We don't know because we don't want to know."
10. "Nothing is more sad than the death of an illusion."
11. "Opposition is indispensable. People will always learn more from those who disagree with them than from those who share their views."
12. "A nation writes its autobiography in the uses to which it puts its leisure time no less than in the produce of its industries."
13. "Some societies have had strong faith in the greatness and nobility of man. Americans today have lost such faith. One symptom of this loss is the absence of hero-figures. As a result, Americans have little faith in mankind generally."
14. "There are everyday objects whose utility we take for granted and whose beauty we overlook."

15. "Success is a journey, not a destination."
16. "Adventure movies, romantic tales, science fiction, and detective stories are often the means of escaping from reality. Such escape is irresponsible. It is also harmful, both to the individual and to his society."
17. "I respect faith, but doubt is what gets you an education."
18. "Nothing is wonderful when you get used to it."
19. "The American student is a victim of herd instinct, and the herd instinct is today taking us in an unfortunate direction."
20. "The tragedy of life is not so much what men suffer, but rather what they miss."
21. "Tradition is society's safeguard, but also its potential executioner."
22. "Wastefulness is part of the American way of life. We use three packages or wrappings when one would do, build machines to be obsolete in five years, and generally waste time, energy, and natural resources. Yet we consider thrift a virtue and we consider ourselves efficient."
23. "We are private beings, but we are also social beings; that we must live in the world with other people is both exasperating and comforting."
24. "We live in an era of language inflation. Being a star is no longer significant because we have superstars; what is normal is tremendous or fabulous (or excellent, extraordinary, superterrific, etc.) This wholesale distribution of highest ratings defeats its own purpose. Everything is presented as something unique, unheard-of, outstanding. Thus, nothing is unique, unheard-of, outstanding. When everything is superlative, everything is mediocre."

TIMED ESSAYS: Well-known Quotes

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First, make certain that you understand the quotation. Then, decide whether you agree or disagree with it. Support your position with specific examples from your reading, study, observation, or experiences.

1. "Alas, possessions possess us." (Henry David Thoreau)
2. "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds." (Ralph Waldo Emerson)
3. "A man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?" (Robert Browning)
4. "Breed is stronger than pasture." (George Eliot)
5. "Hatred is too great a burden to bear." (Martin Luther King, Jr.)
6. "If a man empties his purse into his head, no man can take it away from him. An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest." (Benjamin Franklin)
7. "Money often costs too much." (Ralph Waldo Emerson)
8. "Our life is frittered away by detail...Simplify, simplify." (Henry David Thoreau)
9. "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are underlings." (William Shakespeare)
10. "The history of the world is but the biography of great men." (Thomas Carlyle)
11. "The mass of men live lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation is confirmed desperation...A stereotyped but unconscious despair is concealed even under what are called the games and amusements of mankind." (Henry David Thoreau)
12. "The size of a man can be measured by the size of the thing that makes him angry." (J. K. Morley)
13. "There are some remedies worse than the disease." (Publius Syrus)
14. "To acquire immunity to eloquence is of the utmost importance to the citizens of a democracy." (Bertrand Russell)