

## Activity 14: Essay Prompt

**Writing Assignment:** So far in this assignment sequence, we have heard a number of different voices giving insights into the value of life. Hamlet's soliloquy offers an emotional, metaphor-laden glimpse into the thinking of a young man contemplating suicide. Lance Armstrong's autobiography uses storytelling from a first-person perspective to get across how the famed cyclist thinks about life. Amanda Ripley's article from *Time* magazine provides insight into the problems involved in translating the concept of valuing life from abstract terms into actual dollars and cents. The Human Life Value Calculator establishes specific criteria for assigning monetary value to a person's life.

You may not fully agree or disagree with any of the texts' essential claims about the value of life. This makes your voice an important contribution to this discussion about how we should value human life. Where do your ideas fit into the terrain mapped by the other texts we've read? Is it right to assign dollar values to a person's life? Do suffering and illness impact how we should value life? Assume that the audience for your piece consists of intelligent citizens interested in this issue—the same types of people, for instance, who would read *Time* magazine.

As you write your essay, think about the different ways the texts we have read make points about valuing life. Depending upon the points you are trying to make, you might want to use some metaphors for life, like Hamlet does, or tell some stories the way Armstrong does. You may choose to include some words from people you interview, like Ripley does in her article, or you might even choose to establish some criteria for how human life should be calculated in monetary terms. As you construct your essay, make conscious choices about the ways you can represent your ideas to your reader.

**Essay Prompt:** How should our society assign value to human life?

Be sure to refer to and cite the readings. You may also use examples from your personal experience or observations.