

Read the assignment carefully to make sure you address all aspects of the prompt. Determine the purpose of the assignment. What will you try to accomplish in your essay?

### **On-Demand Writing Assignment for Module 8**

*You will have 45 minutes to plan and write an essay on the topic below. Before you begin writing, plan what you will say. Your essay should be as well-organized and as carefully written as you can make it.*

#### **Writing Task: Entertainment as a Form of Control**

Have we become a trivial culture preoccupied with entertainment? For this writing topic, we return to a quotation from Neil Postman’s book, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, in which he discusses both *Brave New World* and another dystopian novel by British author George Orwell published in 1949:

In the foreword to his 1985 book, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, author Neil Postman notes that the year 1984 had come and gone without a fulfillment of George Orwell’s dark, dystopian vision and that Americans felt satisfied that the “roots of liberal democracy had held.” Big Brother was not watching, and Americans retained their autonomy, freedom, and history. The nightmare world of Big Brother was just that: a nightmare.

However, he reminds us that alongside Orwell’s dark vision there was another vision—“slightly less well known, equally chilling: Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*.” In Huxley’s vision, no force would be required to deprive people of their freedom. Instead, as Huxley saw it, “people will come to love their oppression, to adore the technologies that undo their capacities to think.” Postman follows these observations with a series of further oppositions comparing the two visions.

What Orwell feared were those who would ban books. What Huxley feared was that there would be no reason to ban a book, for there would be no one who wanted to read one. Orwell feared those who would deprive us of information. Huxley feared those who would give us so much that we would be reduced to passivity and egoism. Orwell feared that the truth would be concealed from us. Huxley feared the truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance. Orwell feared we would become a captive culture. Huxley feared we would become a trivial culture, preoccupied with some equivalent of the ‘feelies, the orgy porgy, and the centrifugal bumblepuppy’. In 1984, Huxley added, people are controlled by inflicting pain. In *Brave New World*, they are controlled by inflicting pleasure. In short, Orwell feared that what we hate will ruin us. Huxley feared that what we love will ruin us. (xix-xx)

Postman makes it clear that he thinks Huxley's vision is coming true. Postman blames television for most of the problem. Today, almost thirty years later, the Internet has more influence than television? Has the Internet made Huxley's, and Postman's, vision even more likely?

After reading *Brave New World*, do you think that Postman was right? Is a constant barrage of entertainment making us passive and self-centered? Are we being controlled and conditioned by pleasure as effectively as we would be by a secret police armed with guns and nightsticks? In other words, how similar is our world to the World State depicted in *Brave New World*? And what is the trend? Are we becoming, as Postman suggests, more like *Brave New World* or less?

In answering these questions, identify some important aspects of each society that you want to compare. Then, using your module packet from your reading to support your arguments, discuss the differences and similarities between *Brave New World* and our own society on each of the aspects you have chosen. You may also want to also draw some conclusions about what steps we should take to avoid problems in the future.

### Using the Text

1. A good essay draws on the ideas of others, even if it is to disagree. Use some of the passages or quotes you focused on during your module activities and discussions.
2. In your essay, present the author's ideas through a quote or paraphrase; then follow up in the next sentence or two with an explanation of how you understand or relate to those ideas.
3. An essay with a score of 6 "demonstrates a thorough [complete] critical understanding of the assigned readings in developing an insightful [deep & thoughtful] response."

### Getting ready to write

1. Read and reread the prompt. Underline important verbs that tell you what your essay needs to accomplish.
2. Quickly jot down some ideas that come to mind. IMPORTANT: What will your overall argument (position) be? What terms will you need to define to build and/or support your position?
3. Figure out what just the TOPICS of your body paragraphs might be. Jot down possible Topic Sentences for each body paragraph. Remember: everything that follows in a paragraph must fit under that Topic Sentence. All sentences that follow must work to prove/support the Topic Sentence.

### **Develop your thesis statement**

1. What specific question will your essay answer? What is your response to this question?
2. What support have you found for your thesis?
3. What evidence have you found for this support? (well-known facts, statements from the prompt, events/characters from the book, personal experiences, etc.)
4. How much background do your readers need to understand your topic and thesis?
5. If readers were to disagree with your thesis or the validity of your support, what would they say? What would you say back to them?

### **Organization of your essay**

#### Introduction

- A “hook” to get the reader’s attention
- Background information
- Introduction of subject
- Statement of your opinion (thesis statement)

#### Body Paragraphs

- Ideas! (the more original, the better)
- Statements that support/prove your thesis
- Lots of evidence (logical and emotional) to back up your ideas/statements
- Acknowledging the opposing point of view
- Response to opposing point of view

#### Conclusion

- Restatement of your position
- Call for action or agreement

### **Developing the content of your essay**

1. Body paragraphs consist of a topic sentence (or an implied topic sentence) and concrete details to support that topic sentence.
2. Body paragraphs give evidence in the form of examples, descriptions, statistics, and so on, and analyze the meaning of the evidence.
3. Each topic sentence is directly related to the thesis statement.
4. No set number of paragraphs makes up an essay.
5. The thesis dictates and focuses the content of an essay.

### **Cleaning Up Your Essay**

Even though this is a timed writing task, allow just a few minutes at the end to go back over your writing. Look for mistakes you have a tendency to make. Here are a few:

- Misspelling of common words
- Confusing common words (it's vs. its; their vs. they're vs. there; etc.)
- Missing apostrophes
- Appropriate capitalization
- Sentences that go on too long, whether or not joined by a comma; they **COULD** be run-on sentences
- Using the word "it" or "they" when you can be more specific