

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.

Among other issues, each of the texts in this module considers how we might respond to the ways that social environments and norms constrain us.

About a boy finding that school culture does not value his preferred ways of behaving, David Brooks imagines,

In Kindergarten, he'd wonder why he just couldn't be good. By junior high, he'd lose interest in trying and his grades would plummet.

Then he'd rebel. If the official school culture was über-nurturing, he'd be über-crude. If it valued cooperation and sensitivity, he'd devote his mental energies to violent video games and aggressive music.

Butler, in her video interview, describes the heavy price paid by a teenage boy who walked with a "swish" because he failed to conform to accepted gender norms.

And finally, Audre Lorde suggests that people may try at all costs to accommodate socially imposed constraints, writing, "What are the tyrannies you swallow day by day and attempt to make your own, until you will sicken and die of them, still in silence?" Lorde, however, also suggests an alternative to either suffering silently to fit in or rebelling—she encourages listeners and readers to speak out and use language and action to change the social conditions of our lives.

After you have considered Lorde's question above and the alternative she subsequently proposes, write an essay that proposes meaningful change in our society to an issue of language, gender, or culture raised in these readings. Compose an argument both describing a particular "tyrann[y]" or challenge and proposing changes that may improve the lives of those who endure it. Like Butler, Tannen, Brooks, and Lorde, you may use your own or others' personal experiences (including those of the four authors in this module), hypothetical situations, and reflections to make your case.

Using the Texts

1. A good essay draws on the ideas of others, even if it is to disagree. Use some of the quotes you focused on during your module activities.
2. In your essay, present an author's ideas through a quote; 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. 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? (facts, statistics, statements from authors, personal experiences, anecdotes, scenarios, examples)
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, illustrations, statistics, and so on, and analyze the meaning of the evidence.
3. Each topic sentence is usually 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