

## Q3 argument

Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. The following excerpt is from researcher Erin Bryant’s “Real Lies, White Lies and Gray Lies: Towards a Typology of Deception” (2008). Read the excerpt carefully. Then write an essay that argues your position on the circumstances—if any—under which lying should be considered acceptable.

To group all lying into one category is misleading. . . . Some lies . . . are trivial and may even prevent someone from being hurt by an unnecessary truth. These harmless white lies have been called a communication competence or “social lubricant” because they allow people to censor negative thoughts and truths.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a claim that establishes a line of reasoning.
- Select and use evidence to develop and support your line of reasoning.
- Explain the relationship between the evidence and your thesis.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the rhetorical situation.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.



Please respond on separate paper, following directions from your teacher.

2. Through tatter’d clothes small vices do appear;  
Robes and furr’d gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,  
And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks;  
Arm it in rags, a pigmy’s straw does pierce it.

Shakespeare, King Lear

The lines above are from a speech by King Lear. Write a carefully reasoned essay in which you briefly paraphrase Lear’s statement and then defend, challenge, or qualify his view of the relationship between wealth and justice. Support your argument with specific references to your reading, observation, or experience.



Please respond on separate paper, following directions from your teacher.

3. The passage below is from *The Worst Years of Our Lives* by Barbara Ehrenreich. Ehrenreich is writing about life in the 1980s. Read the passage carefully and then write an essay in which you support, refute, or qualify Ehrenreich’s assertions about television. Support your argument with appropriate evidence.

Only after many months of viewing did I begin to understand the force that has transformed the



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American people into root vegetables. If you watch TV for a very long time, day in, day out, you will begin to notice something eerie and unnatural about the world portrayed therein. I don't mean that it is two-dimensional or lacks a well-developed critique of the capitalist consumer culture or something superficial like that. I mean something so deeply obvious that it's almost scary: when you watch television, you will see people doing many things—chasing fast cars, drinking lite beer, shooting each other at close range, etc. But you will never see people *watching television*. Well, maybe for a second, before the phone rings or a brand-new, multiracial adopted child walks into the house. But never *really watching*, hour after hour, the way *real* people do.

Way back in the beginning of the television era, this was not so strange, because real people actually did many of the things people do on TV, even if it was only bickering with their mothers-in-law about which toilet paper to buy. But modern people, i.e., couch potatoes, do nothing that is ever shown on television (because it is either dangerous or would involve getting up from the couch). And what they do do—watch television—is far too boring to be televised for more than a fraction of a second, not even by Andy Warhol,\* bless his boredom-proof little heart.

So why do we keep on watching?

\*Artist and filmmaker known for using repeated images and for making movies dealing with time, boredom, and repetition

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4. The passage below is from *The Medusa and the Snail* by biologist Lewis Thomas. Read the passage carefully. Then, drawing on your own reading and experience, write an essay that defends, challenges, or qualifies Thomas's claims.

Mistakes are at the very base of human thought, embedded there, feeding the structure like root nodules. If we were not provided with the knack of being wrong, we could never get anything useful done. We think our way along by choosing between right and wrong alternatives, and the wrong choices have to be made as frequently as the right ones. We get along in life this way. We are built to make mistakes, coded for error.

We learn, as we say, by “trial and error.” Why do we always say that? Why not “trial and rightness” or “trial and triumph”? The old phrase puts it that way because that is, in real life, the way it is done.

A good laboratory, like a good bank or a corporation or government, has to run like a computer. Almost everything is done flawlessly, by the book, and all the numbers add up to the predicted sums. The days go by. And then, if it is a lucky day, and a lucky laboratory, somebody makes a mistake: the wrong buffer, something in one of the blanks, a decimal misplaced in reading counts, the warm room off by a degree and a half, a mouse out of his box, or just a misreading of the day's protocol. Whatever, when the results come in, something is obviously screwed up, and then the action can begin.



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The misreading is not the important error; it opens the way. The next step is the crucial one. If the investigator can bring himself to say, “But even so, look at that!” then the new finding, whatever it is, is ready for snatching. What is needed, for progress to be made, is the move based on the error.

Whenever new kinds of thinking are about to be accomplished, or new varieties of music, there has to be an argument beforehand. With two sides debating in the same mind, haranguing, there is an amiable understanding that one is right and the other wrong. Sooner or later the thing is settled, but there can be no action at all if there are not the two sides, and the argument. The hope is in the faculty of wrongness, the tendency toward error. The capacity to leap across mountains of information to land lightly on the wrong side represents the highest of human endowments.

(1979)



Please respond on separate paper, following directions from your teacher.

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5. The following passage is from *Rights of Man*, a book written by the pamphleteer Thomas Paine in 1791. Born in England, Paine was an intellectual, a revolutionary, and a supporter of American independence from England. Read the passage carefully. Then write an essay that examines the extent to which Paine’s characterization of America holds true today. Use appropriate evidence to support your argument.

If there is a country in the world, where concord, according to common calculation, would be least expected, it is America. Made up, as it is, of people from different nations, accustomed to different forms and habits of government, speaking different languages, and more different in their modes of worship, it would appear that the union of such a people was impracticable; but by the simple operation of constructing government on the principles of society and the rights of man, every difficulty retires, and all the parts are brought into cordial unison. There, the poor are not oppressed, the rich are not privileged. . . . Their taxes are few, because their government is just; and as there is nothing to render them wretched, there is nothing to engender riots and tumults.



Please respond on separate paper, following directions from your teacher.

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6. The following passage comes from “The Common Life,” a 1994 essay by the American writer Scott Russell Sanders. Read the passage carefully and then write an essay that defends, challenges, or qualifies Sanders’ ideas about the relationship between the individual and society in the United States. Use specific evidence to support your position.

A woman who recently moved from Los Angeles to Bloomington [Indiana] told me that she would not be able to stay here long, because she was already beginning to recognize people in the grocery stores, on the sidewalks, in the library. Being surrounded by familiar faces made her nervous, after years in a



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city where she could range about anonymously. Every traveler knows the sense of liberation that comes from journeying to a place where nobody expects anything of you. Everyone who has gone to college knows the exhilaration of slipping away from the watchful eyes of Mom and Dad. We all need seasons of withdrawal from responsibility. But if we make a career of being unaccountable, we have lost something essential to our humanity, and we may well become a burden or a threat to those around us. A community can support a number of people who are just passing through, or who care about no one's needs but their own; the greater the proportion of such people, however, the more vulnerable the community, until eventually it breaks down. . . . Taking part in the common life means dwelling in a web of relationships, the many threads tugging at you while also holding you upright.



Please respond on separate paper, following directions from your teacher.

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7. The first chapter of Ecclesiastes, a book of the Bible, concludes with these words:

"For in much wisdom is much grief, and increase of knowledge is increase of sorrow."

Write a carefully reasoned, persuasive essay that defends, challenges, or qualifies this assertion. Use evidence from your observation, experience, or reading to develop your position.



Please respond on separate paper, following directions from your teacher.

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8. The first Buy Nothing Day—a day on which people are urged to purchase no goods—was organized in Canada in 1992 as a way to increase awareness of excessive consumerism. A Buy Nothing Day has been held yearly since then in many nations. An online article, "Buy Nothing Day: 2006 Press Release," urged worldwide acceptance of taking a "24-hour consumer detox as part of the 14th annual Buy Nothing Day" in order to "expose the environmental and ethical consequences of overconsumption" ("Buy Nothing Day," courtesy *Adbusters*, [www.adbusters.org](http://www.adbusters.org)).

Consider the implications of a day on which no goods are purchased. Then write an essay in which you develop a position on the establishment of an annual Buy Nothing Day. Support your argument with appropriate evidence.



Please respond on separate paper, following directions from your teacher.

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9. Sui Sin Far, born Edith Maude Eaton, was a well-respected commentator on Chinese-American life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In her famous essay "Leaves from the Mental Portfolio



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of an Eurasian”(*The Independent*, 21 January 1909), she asserts that “individuality is more important than nationality.”

Far’s comment is relevant in discussions ranging well beyond those about individuality and nationality. For example, some people argue that identifying oneself as a member of a society or culture is more important than being an individual. Others argue that being true to one’s self carries more weight than being a member of a society or culture.

Write an essay in which you explain your position on individuality and nationality. Use appropriate evidence from your reading, experience, or observations to support your argument.



Please respond on separate paper, following directions from your teacher.

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10. Read the following passage by the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860). Then write a carefully reasoned essay that defends, challenges, or qualifies one of Schopenhauer’s claims. Support your argument with appropriate evidence.

The difference between the effect that thinking for oneself and that reading has on the mind is incredibly great; hence it is continually developing that original difference in minds which induces one man to think and another to read. Reading forces thoughts upon the mind which are as foreign and heterogeneous to the bent and mood in which it may be for the moment, as the seal is to the wax on which it stamps its imprint. The mind thus suffers total compulsion from without; it has first this and first that to think about, for which it has at the time neither instinct nor liking.

On the other hand, when a man thinks for himself he follows his own impulse, which either his external surroundings or some kind of recollection has determined at the moment. His visible surroundings do not leave upon his mind *one* single definite thought as reading does, but merely supply him with material and occasion to think over what is in keeping with his nature and present mood. This is why much reading robs the mind of all elasticity; it is like keeping a spring under a continuous, heavy weight. If a man does not want to think, the safest plan is to take up a book directly he has a spare moment.

This practice accounts for the fact that learning makes most men more stupid and foolish than they are by nature, and prevents their writings from being a success; they remain, as Pope has said,

“For ever reading, never to be read.”—*Dunciad*, iii. 194.

Men of learning are those who have read the contents of books. Thinkers, geniuses, and those who have enlightened the world and furthered the race of men, are those who have made direct use of the book of the world.



Please respond on separate paper, following directions from your teacher.



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11. Read the following excerpt from *The Decline of Radicalism* (1969) by Daniel J. Boorstin and consider the implications of the distinction Boorstin makes between dissent and disagreement. Then, using appropriate evidence, write a carefully reasoned essay in which you defend, challenge, or qualify Boorstin's distinction.

Dissent is the great problem of America today. It overshadows all others. It is a symptom, an expression, a consequence, and a cause of all others.

I say dissent and not disagreement. And it is the distinction between dissent and disagreement which I really want to make. Disagreement produces debate but dissent produces dissension. Dissent (which comes from the Latin, *dis* and *sentire*) means originally to feel apart from others.

People who disagree have an argument, but people who dissent have a quarrel. People may disagree and both may count themselves in the majority. But a person who dissents is by definition in a minority. A liberal society thrives on disagreement but is killed by dissension. Disagreement is the life blood of democracy, dissension is its cancer.



Please respond on separate paper, following directions from your teacher.

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12. Read the following excerpt from a news story. Then, using appropriate support, write an editorial for your school or local newspaper in which you develop a position on the issues raised in this news story.

PIPER, Kansas (AP) — High school teacher Christine Pelton wasted no time after discovering that nearly a fifth of her biology students had plagiarized their semester projects from the Internet.

She had received her rural Kansas district's backing before when she accused students of cheating, and she expected it again this time after failing the 28 sophomores.

Her principal and superintendent agreed: It was plagiarism and the students should get a zero for the assignment.

But after parents complained, the Piper School Board ordered her to go easier on the guilty.

Pelton resigned in protest in an episode that some say reflects a national decline in integrity.

"This kind of thing is happening every day around the country, where people with integrity are not being backed by their organization," said Michael Josephson, founder and president of the Josephson Institute of Ethics in Marina del Rey, California.

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13. The term “overrated” is often used to diminish concepts, places, roles, etc. that the speaker believes do not deserve the prestige they commonly enjoy; for example, many writers have argued that success is overrated, a character in a novel by Anthony Burgess famously describes Rome as a “vastly overrated city,” and Queen Rania of Jordan herself has asserted that “[b]eing queen is overrated.”

**Select a concept, place, role, etc. to which you believe that the term “overrated” should be applied. Then, write a well-developed essay in which you explain your judgment. Use appropriate evidence from your reading, experience, or observations to support your argument.**

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a claim that establishes a line of reasoning.
- Select and use evidence to develop and support your line of reasoning.
- Develop commentary that explains the relationship between the evidence and your claim, demonstrating an understanding of the rhetorical situation.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.



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14. Michael Ignatieff, Professor of the Practice of Human Rights Policy at Harvard University, made the following observation.

To belong is to understand the tacit codes of the people you live with.

—Blood and Belonging

Consider how unspoken rules help to define group identity. Then write a carefully reasoned essay that examines the relationship between unspoken rules and belonging. Use specific examples to develop your position.



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15. *In the following excerpt from Antigone, by the classical Greek playwright Sophocles, the wise Teiresias observes*



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Think: all men make mistakes,  
But a good man yields when he  
Knows his course is wrong,  
And repairs the evil: The only  
Crime is pride.

*Take some time to think about the implications of the quotation. Then write a carefully reasoned essay that explores the validity of the assertion, using examples from your reading, observation, or experience to develop your position.*



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16. In many national elections, only a fraction of eligible voters actually casts ballots. For local elections, the voter turnout is often even smaller. To prevent this state of affairs, some countries, such as Australia, make voting compulsory for all adults. In a well-written essay that draws upon your reading, experience, or observations for support, take a position on the issue of compulsory voting.



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17. In his 2004 book, *Status Anxiety*, Alain de Botton argues that the chief aim of humorists is not merely to entertain but “to convey with impunity messages that might be dangerous or impossible to state directly.” Because society allows humorists to say things that other people cannot or will not say, de Botton sees humorists as serving a vital function in society.

Think about the implications of de Botton’s view of the role of humorists (cartoonists, stand-up comics, satirical writers, hosts of television programs, etc.). Then write an essay that defends, challenges, or qualifies de Botton’s claim about the vital role of humorists. Use specific, appropriate evidence to develop your position.



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18. In his 1998 book *Life the Movie: How Entertainment Conquered Reality*, Neal Gabler wrote the following.

One does not necessarily have to cluck in disapproval to admit that entertainment is all the things its detractors say it is: fun, effortless, sensational, mindless, formulaic, predictable and subversive. In fact,





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one might argue that those are the very reasons so many people love it.

At the same time, it is not hard to see why cultural aristocrats in the nineteenth century and intellectuals in the twentieth hated entertainment and why they predicted, as one typical nineteenth century critic railed, that its eventual effect would be “to overturn all morality, to poison the springs of domestic happiness, to dissolve the ties of our social order, and to involve our country in ruin.”

Write a thoughtful and carefully constructed essay in which you use specific evidence to defend, challenge, or qualify the assertion that entertainment has the capacity to “ruin” society.



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19. In her book *Gift from the Sea*, author and aviator Anne Morrow Lindbergh (1906–2001) writes, “We tend not to choose the unknown which might be a shock or a disappointment or simply a little difficult to cope with. And yet it is the unknown with all its disappointments and surprises that is the most enriching.”

Consider the value Lindbergh places on choosing the unknown. Then write an essay in which you develop your own position on the value of exploring the unknown. Use appropriate, specific evidence to illustrate and develop your position.



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20. In a book published in 1999, psychologist Richard DeGrandpre asserts:

When we ruminate about and plan things to come, when we study and work toward some anticipated eventuality, and when we imagine and harbor certain expectations about what the future could, should, or will be like, what we are often doing, albeit unintentionally, is redirecting our consciousness away from the present and into the future. When we do this, there is a tendency, again unintentional, of undervaluing our sense of the present.

How does thinking about the future affect one’s ability to experience and appreciate the present? In a well-written essay, develop a position on the extent to which anticipating and planning for the future affects our capacity to, as DeGrandpre puts it earlier in the same chapter, “appreciate the moment and, ultimately, life as a whole.” Use appropriate, specific evidence to illustrate and develop your position.



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21. In a 2011 essay in *The Atlantic*, author and journalist Lori Gottlieb writes:

Nowadays, it's not enough to be happy — if you can be even happier. The American Dream and the pursuit of happiness have morphed from a quest for general contentment to the idea that you must be happy at all times and in every way.

Gottlieb then cites Barry Schwartz, a professor of social theory: “Happiness as a byproduct of living your life is a great thing . . . [b]ut happiness as a goal is a recipe for disaster.”

In a well-developed essay, take a position on the claim that pursuing happiness as a goal has detrimental effects. Support your argument with appropriate evidence from your experience, observations, or reading.



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22. In 1891, Irish author Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) observed, “Disobedience, in the eyes of anyone who has read history, is man’s original virtue. It is through disobedience that progress has been made, through disobedience and through rebellion.”

Wilde claims that disobedience is a valuable human trait and that it promotes social progress. Write an essay that argues your position on the extent to which Wilde’s claims are valid. Use appropriate examples from your reading, experience, or observations to support your argument.



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23. In “The Singer Solution to World Poverty,” an article that appeared in *The New York Times Magazine*, Peter Singer, a professor of bioethics, calls attention to the urgent need for food and medicine in many parts of the world. Singer argues that prosperous people should donate to overseas aid organizations such as UNICEF or Oxfam America all money not needed for the basic requirements of life. “The formula is simple: whatever money you’re spending on luxuries, not necessities, should be given away.”

Write an essay in which you evaluate the pros and cons of Singer’s argument. Use appropriate evidence as you examine each side, and indicate which position you find more persuasive.



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24. From talk radio to television shows, from popular magazines to Web blogs, ordinary citizens, political figures, and entertainers express their opinions on a wide range of topics. Are these opinions worthwhile? Does the expression of such opinions foster democratic values?

Write an essay in which you take a position on the value of such public statements of opinion, supporting your view with appropriate evidence.



Please respond on separate paper, following directions from your teacher.

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25. For years corporations have sponsored high school sports. Their ads are found on the outfield fence at baseball parks or on the walls of the gymnasium, the football stadium, or even the locker room. Corporate logos are even found on players' uniforms. But some schools have moved beyond corporate sponsorship of sports to allowing "corporate partners" to place their names and ads on all kinds of school facilities—libraries, music rooms, cafeterias. Some schools accept money to require students to watch Channel One, a news program that includes advertising. And schools often negotiate exclusive contracts with soft drink or clothing companies.

Some people argue that corporate partnerships are a necessity for cash-strapped schools. Others argue that schools should provide an environment free from ads and corporate influence. Using appropriate evidence, write an essay in which you evaluate the pros and cons of corporate sponsorship for schools and indicate why you find one position more persuasive than the other.



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26. For centuries, prominent thinkers have pondered the relationship between ownership and the development of self (identity), ultimately asking the question, "What does it mean to own something?"

Plato argues that owning objects is detrimental to a person's character. Aristotle claims that ownership of tangible goods helps to develop moral character. Twentieth-century philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre proposes that ownership extends beyond objects to include intangible things as well. In Sartre's view, becoming proficient in some skill and knowing something thoroughly means that we "own" it.

Think about the differing views of ownership. Then write an essay in which you explain your position on the relationship between ownership and sense of self. Use appropriate evidence from your reading, experience, or observations to support your argument.



Please respond on separate paper, following directions from your teacher.



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27. In the following passage from the essay “The Talented Tenth” (1903), American sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois spends time defining what the purpose of education is not. Read the passage carefully. Then write an essay that argues your position on what the true purpose of education should be.

[T]he training of men is a difficult and intricate task. Its technique is a matter for educational experts, but its object is for the vision of seers. If we make money the object of man-training, we shall develop money-makers but not necessarily men; if we make technical skill the object of education, we may possess artisans but not, in nature, men.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that analyzes the writer’s rhetorical choices.
- Select and use evidence to develop and support your line of reasoning.
- Explain the relationship between the evidence and your thesis.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the rhetorical situation.



Please respond on separate paper, following directions from your teacher.

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28. In a speech delivered in 1883, social reformer and writer Frederick Douglass asserted that “No man can put a chain about the ankle of his fellow man, without at last finding the other end of it fastened about his own neck.” When attempting to control someone or something, do people compromise their own freedom in the process? Carefully consider the implications of Douglass’s assertion. Compose a thesis statement that you might use for an essay arguing your position on the validity of Douglass’s assertion, then provide bullet lines of reasoning with brief references to evidence from your reading, experience, or observation.



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29. Contemporary life is marked by controversy. Choose a controversial local, national, or global issue with which you are familiar. Then, using appropriate evidence, write an essay that carefully considers the opposing positions on this controversy and proposes a solution or compromise.



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30. Consider the following quotation from “The American Scholar,” a speech given by philosopher and writer Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) in 1837.

“Books are the best of things, well used; abused, among the worst.”

In a well-organized essay, examine the extent to which Emerson’s assertion about the power of books is true or relevant today. Support your argument with appropriate examples from your reading, observations, or experience.



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31. Consider the distinct perspectives expressed in the following statements.

If you develop the absolute sense of certainty that powerful beliefs provide, then you can get yourself to accomplish virtually anything, including those things that other people are certain are impossible.

*William Lyon Phelps, American educator, journalist, and professor (1865–1943)*

I think we ought always to entertain our opinions with some measure of doubt. I shouldn’t wish people dogmatically to believe any philosophy, not even mine.

*Bertrand Russell, British author, mathematician, and philosopher (1872–1970)*

In a well-organized essay, take a position on the relationship between certainty and doubt. Support your argument with appropriate evidence and examples.



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32. Carefully read the following passage from *Testaments Betrayed*, by the Czech writer Milan Kundera. Then write an essay in which you support, qualify, or dispute Kundera’s claim. Support your argument with appropriate evidence.

I wrote about this in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*: Jan Prochazka, an important figure of the Prague Spring, came under heavy surveillance after the Russian invasion of 1968. At the time, he saw a good deal of another great opposition figure, Professor Vaclav Cerny, with whom he liked to drink and talk. All their conversations were secretly recorded, and I suspect the two friends knew it and didn’t give a damn. But one day in 1970 or 1971, with the intent to discredit Prochazka, the police began to broadcast these conversations as a radio serial. For the police it was an audacious, unprecedented act. And, surprisingly: it nearly succeeded; instantly Prochazka *was* discredited: because in private, a person says all sorts of things, slurs friends, uses coarse language, acts silly, tells dirty jokes, repeats himself,



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makes a companion laugh by shocking him with outrageous talk, floats heretical ideas he'd never admit in public, and so forth. Of course, we all act like Prochazka, in private we badmouth our friends and use coarse language; that we act different in private than in public is everyone's most conspicuous experience, it is the very ground of the life of the individual; curiously, this obvious fact remains unconscious, unacknowledged, forever obscured by lyrical dreams of the transparent glass house, it is rarely understood to be the value one must defend beyond all others. Thus only gradually did people realize (though their rage was all the greater) that the real scandal was not Prochazka's daring talk but the rape of his life; they realized (as if by electric shock) that private and public are two essentially different worlds and that respect for that difference is the indispensable condition, the sine qua non, for a man to live free; that the curtain separating these two worlds is not to be tampered with, and that curtain-rippers are criminals.

(1995)



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33. Carefully read the following passage from Michael J. Sandel's book *Justice: What's The Right Thing To Do?*, published in 2009. Then write an essay in which you develop a position on Sandel's claim that for the common good, citizens should openly address moral disagreements on matters of public policy. Use appropriate evidence from your experience, observations, or reading.

[W]e need a more robust and engaged civic life than the one to which we've become accustomed. In recent decades, we've come to assume that respecting our fellow citizens' moral and religious convictions means ignoring them (for political purposes, at least), leaving them undisturbed, and conducting our public life—insofar as possible—without reference to them. But this stance of avoidance can make for a spurious\* respect. Often, it means suppressing moral disagreement rather than actually avoiding it. This can provoke backlash and resentment. It can also make for an impoverished public discourse, lurching from one news cycle to the next, preoccupied with the scandalous, the sensational, and the trivial.

\*false or fake



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34. Carefully read the following passage by Susan Sontag. Then write an essay in which you support, refute, or qualify Sontag's claim that photography limits our understanding of the world. Use appropriate evidence to develop your argument.

Photography implies that we know about the world if we accept it as the camera records it. But this is the opposite of understanding, which starts from not accepting the world as it looks. All possibility of



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understanding is rooted in the ability to say no. Strictly speaking, one never understands anything from a photograph. Of course, photographs fill in blanks in our mental pictures of the present and the past: for example, Jacob Riis's images of New York squalor in the 1880's are sharply instructive to those unaware that urban poverty in late-nineteenth-century America was really that Dickensian. Nevertheless, the camera's rendering of reality must always hide more than it discloses. As Brecht points out, a photograph of the Krupp works\* reveals virtually nothing about that organization. In contrast to the amorous relation, which is based on how something looks, understanding is based on how it functions. And functioning takes place in time and must be explained in time. Only that which narrates can make us understand.

The limit of photographic knowledge of the world is that, while it can goad conscience, it can, finally, never be ethical or political knowledge. The knowledge gained through still photographs will always be some kind of sentimentalism, whether cynical or humanist. It will be a knowledge at bargain prices—a semblance of knowledge, a semblance of wisdom. . . . The very muteness of what is, hypothetically, comprehensible in photographs is what constitutes their attraction and provocativeness. The omnipresence of photographs has an incalculable effect on our ethical sensibility. By furnishing this already crowded world with a duplicate one of images, photography makes us feel that the world is more available than it really is.

Needing to have reality confirmed and experience enhanced by photographs is an aesthetic consumerism to which everyone is now addicted. Industrial societies turn their citizens into image-junkies; it is the most irresistible form of mental pollution.

—On Photography, 1977

\* Krupp: a German weapons manufacturing firm that was instrumental in the Nazi rearmament effort of the 1930's.



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35. Authors Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman published “The Creativity Crisis” in *Newsweek.com* in July 2010. They reported that the Torrance Test, a test of creativity that has been administered to millions of people worldwide in 50 languages, indicates that the public’s “creativity quotient” has steadily crept downward since 1990. In their article, Bronson and Merryman cite the claim of Professor Kyung Hee Kim at the College of William and Mary: “It’s very clear, and the decrease is very significant.” Kim reports that it is the scores of younger children in America—from kindergarten through sixth grade—for whom the decline is “most serious.”

Bronson and Merryman state that “[t]he potential consequences are sweeping. The necessity of human ingenuity is undisputed. A recent IBM poll of 1,500 CEOs identified creativity as the No. 1 ‘leadership competency’ of the future. Yet it’s not just about sustaining our nation’s economic growth. All around us are matters of national and international importance that are crying out for creative solutions, from saving the Gulf of Mexico to bringing peace to Afghanistan to delivering health care. Such solutions emerge from a healthy marketplace of ideas, sustained by a populace constantly contributing original ideas and receptive to the ideas of others.”



**Q3 argument**

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One possible approach to this reputed decline in creativity is to explicitly teach creative thinking in school. Write to your school board explaining what you mean by creativity *and* arguing for or against the creation of a class in creativity.



Please respond on separate paper, following directions from your teacher.

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36. Author and lecturer Alfie Kohn contends that “competition by its very nature is always unhealthy.” Read the following excerpt from Kohn’s essay “Why Competition?”

The cost of any kind of competition in human terms is incalculable. When my success depends on other people’s failure, the prospects for a real human community are considerably diminished. . . . Moreover, when my success depends on my being *better than*, I am caught on a treadmill, destined never to enjoy real satisfaction. Someone is always one step higher, and even the summit is a precarious position in light of the hordes waiting to occupy it in my stead. I am thus perpetually insecure and, as psychologist Rollo May points out, perpetually anxious.

Then, in a well-written essay, develop a position on Kohn’s claim about the nature of competition. Use appropriate evidence from your reading, experience, or observations to support your argument.



Please respond on separate paper, following directions from your teacher.

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37. An anthropologist studying first-year students at a university in the United States writes that friendly phrases like “How are you?,” “Nice to meet you,” and “Let’s get in touch” communicate politeness rather than literal intent. What, if anything, is the value or function of such polite speech?

In a well-written essay, develop your position on the value or function of polite speech in a culture or community with which you are familiar. Use appropriate evidence from your reading, experience, or observations to support your argument.



Please respond on separate paper, following directions from your teacher.

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38. American essayist and social critic H. L. Mencken (1880–1956) wrote, “The average man does not want to be free. He simply wants to be safe.” In a well-written essay, examine the extent to which Mencken’s observation applies to contemporary society, supporting your position with appropriate evidence.





**Q3 argument**

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Please respond on separate paper, following directions from your teacher.

39. Adversity has the effect of eliciting talents which in prosperous circumstances would have lain dormant.

—Horace

Consider this quotation about adversity from the Roman poet Horace. Then write an essay that defends, challenges, or qualifies Horace’s assertion about the role that adversity (financial or political hardship, danger, misfortune, etc.) plays in developing a person’s character. Support your argument with appropriate evidence from your reading, observation, or experience.



Please respond on separate paper, following directions from your teacher.

40. A weekly feature of *The New York Times Magazine* is a column by Randy Cohen called “The Ethicist,” in which people raise ethical questions to which Cohen provides answers. The question below is from the column that appeared on April 4, 2003.

*At my high school, various clubs and organizations sponsor charity drives, asking students to bring in money, food, and clothing. Some teachers offer bonus points on tests and final averages as incentives to participate. Some parents believe that this sends a morally wrong message, undermining the value of charity as a selfless act. Is the exchange of donations for grades O.K. ?*

The practice of offering incentives for charitable acts is widespread, from school projects to fund drives by organizations such as public television stations, to federal income tax deductions for contributions to charities. In a well-written essay, develop a position on the ethics of offering incentives for charitable acts. Support your position with evidence from your reading, observation, and/or experience.



Please respond on separate paper, following directions from your teacher.

41. (This question counts for one-third of the total essay section score.)

The passage below is an excerpt from *Empire of Illusion* by Chris Hedges. Read the passage carefully. Then write an essay in which you develop a position on Hedges’ argument that “the most essential skill . . . is artifice.” Use appropriate, specific evidence to illustrate and develop your position.

The most essential skill in political theater and a consumer culture is artifice. Political leaders, who use



**Q3 argument**

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the tools of mass propaganda to create a sense of faux intimacy with citizens, no longer need to be competent, sincere, or honest. They need only to appear to have these qualities. Most of all they need a story, a personal narrative. The reality of the narrative is irrelevant. It can be completely at odds with the facts. The consistency and emotional appeal of the story are paramount. Those who are best at deception succeed. Those who have not mastered the art of entertainment, who fail to create a narrative or do not have one fashioned for them by their handlers, are ignored. They become “unreal.”

An image-based culture communicates through narratives, pictures, and pseudo-drama.



Please respond on separate paper, following directions from your teacher.