WRITING WORKSHOPS

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Center for Learning and Academic Support Services

C.L.A.S.S.

California State University Dominequez Hills

Spring 2009
IN-CLASS ESSAYS

Blue Book
Exit Exam  (ENG 099)
Comp Co-op  (ENG 350)
GWE  (Graduate Writing Exam)
What is Timed Essay?

In-class essay, or timed essay, tests students’ skills in:

1. Critical reading (comprehension)
2. Critical thinking (invention of ideas)
3. Critical writing (logical/analytical writing).

1. Critical reading, or comprehension, concerns close reading of the prompt, understanding of its topic, and identification of its task or tasks.

2. Critical thinking concerns invention of ideas related to the topic of the prompt and formulation of thesis statement.

3. Critical writing concerns the logical structure of the essay, analysis or exposition of the topic that creates essay’s overall organization.
Steps in Timed Essay

1. Read the prompt

2. Invent ideas (Thesis Statement)

3. Write the essay (Introduction, Body, Conclusion)
Dividing the Time

As a rule, most in-class essays are allotted 60 minutes. Comp Coop has two sessions of 45 minutes each.

For in-class essays of one hour, divide your time as follows:

10 minutes: Read the prompt carefully to identify the topic and tasks.

Formulate a thesis statement based on the tasks presented in the prompt.

40 minutes: Write five paragraphs: one introduction, three paragraphs based on the three aspects contained in the thesis statement, and one conclusion.

10 minutes: Proofread and revise if necessary. Write revised lines or added on the left-hand page of the blue book.
Structure of Prompts

Prompts always have a **topic** (the subject that the essay is about), and a **task** or **tasks** about the topic that are usually identified by one or more verbs such as:

- Select
- Define
- Describe
- Explain
- Discuss
- Analyze
- Argue (take a position)
- Evaluate
- Summarize
Define means to determine the boundaries of; to give the distinguishing characteristics of; to determine the extent and nature of; to constitute the distinction of.

Describe means to picture in words using sensory details (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch).

Explain means to give explanation. It implies a making clear or intelligible of something that is not known or understood (ex. to explain how a machine operates).

Discuss means to talk about the subject. It implies a talking about something in a deliberative fashion, with varying opinions offered constructively so as to settle an issue or decide on a course of action.

Compare means to examine in order to observe or discover similarities or differences. It implies the weighing of parallel features for relative values.
**Identify** means to find out the origin, nature, or definitive elements of.

**Analyze** means to separate a thing or idea into its parts so as to find out their nature, proportion, function, interrelationship.

**Evaluate** means to judge or determine the worth or quality of.

**Summarize** means to present the substance or general idea in brief form; to state briefly.

**Relate** means to show a relation between; to connect or associate, as in thought or meaning.
How to identify parts of prompts

To identify the parts of the prompt, that is, its

*topic* (the main idea)

supports

tasks

underline each of the above three parts
From infancy to adulthood, **advertising** is in the **air** Americans breathe, the information we absorb, almost without knowing it. It floods our mind with **pictures of perfection and goals of happiness** easy to attain. . . . We are feeding on foolery, of which a steady diet, for those who feed on little else, cannot help but leave **a certain fuzziness of perception.**

Barbara Tuchman

Write a well organized and fully developed essay in which you do the following:

- **Select and discuss** some specific **examples of advertising** that illustrate what Tuchman calls “**pictures of perfections and goals of happiness.**”

- **Explain** how such advertisements can lead to a certain “**fuzziness of perception,**” a distorted picture of reality.

- **Discuss** what you consider to be some of the **important effects** of widespread and pervasive advertising **on individuals** here in America.
1. Select and discuss specific examples of advertising that illustrate “pictures of perfections and goals of happiness”:
   - Beer advertisements (target young men and women)
   - Makeup/beauty advertisements
   - Car advertisements
   - Drug advertisements (target adult population)
   - Weight loss advertisements

2. Explain how such advertisements can lead to a certain “fuzziness of perception,” a distorted picture of reality:
   Ads glamorizing drinking tend to present images of happiness, youth, and pleasure in life. However, since their claim has no bearing on reality they tend to create a “fuzziness of perception, a distorted picture of reality.
   Beauty ads only present beautiful models and claim that the use of beauty products will result in beautiful skin and body. However, the young and beautiful models in such ads are not representative of the average population.

3. Discuss important effects of advertising on individuals:
   - Alcoholism/addictions
   - Low self-esteem
   - Anorexia/bulimia
Sample Introduction

Barbara Tuchman argues that in America advertising pervades everywhere like the air people breath. Advertisements flood our minds with images of perfection and happiness that are neither true nor attainable. Like fools, we absorb this onslaught daily, and for those of us who buy into these images they distort our perception of reality, leaving us with a “fuzziness of perception and a distorted picture of reality.” The pervasiveness and intensity of these images produce detrimental social and psychological effects on individuals here in America.
Sample Conclusion

The combined effects of widespread and pervasive advertising on individuals in America go beyond the images of perfection and the fuzziness of perception. So long the population feed on this foolery, the social and psychological effects of advertising will continue to impact the individuals. In order to combat this negative trend, parents and educators should inform youngsters of its pitfalls by exposing the falsehood of claims in advertisements and the untruth in the images they illustrate.
We expect our ties with our immediate family to extend throughout the lifetimes of the people involved. This expectation is by no means always fulfilled, as rising divorce rates and family break-ups indicate. Nevertheless, we still theoretically marry “until death do us part” and the social ideal is a lifetime relationship. Whether this is a proper or realistic expectation of a society in high transience is debatable. The fact remains, however, that family links are expected to be long term if not lifelong, and considerable guilt attaches to the person who breaks off such a relationship.

*Future Shock*, Alvin Toffler

Write a well organized and fully developed essay in which you do the following:

- **Discuss** how marriage as an institution in America is changing.

- **Identify** some of the signs that marriages are no longer expected to last a lifetime.

- **Explain** the possible social effects of viewing marriage as a less than permanent relationship.
Discuss how marriage as an institution in America is changing.
- Women’s rights before 1940 and after
- Women’s rights movement
- Second World War
- Women in the work force
- Women’s right to vote, right to jobs, right to education

Identify some of the signs that marriages are no longer expected to last a lifetime.
- Women’s financial independence
- The rise women in society
- Male-female equality
- Breakup of nucleus family (husband-wife-children to single parents)

Explain the possible social effects of viewing marriage as a less than permanent relationship.
- Increase in unemployment
- disappearance of the traditional family
- Family links no longer life long
- Children raised with one parent
GWE

For the complete discussion of GWE prompts and test-taking strategies, log onto www.csudh.edu

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click on the link Handbook.
To download this workshop, log onto:

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GOOD LUCK