Have you ever wondered what the world would be like without writing? It would not be as exciting or developed as it is right now. Since the invention of writing, the human race has passed down generations of ideas and concepts we would not have known. History would repeat itself because we have not learned from our mistakes. Although it may be common sense to agree that writing has benefited us all, Levi-Strauss claims that writing is to facilitate the enslavement of other human beings. Although this might be true in some cases, we cannot neglect the different sides of writing. Our education, social hierarchy, liberty, and communication, emotions all come down to writing.

Levi-Strauss stated that human intelligence fluctuates. He noted that the neolithic age came with revolutionary inventions, agriculture, the domestication of animals, and arts and crafts, despite not knowing how to write. This development had advanced the human race more than when people knew how to write. However, he had overlooked one fact; it only succeeded throughout thousands of years of observing, experimenting, and handing down their findings. What if, during that period, people could document their findings on papyrus or they could carve it on some stone tablet? Or even more, what if they had results from people from the past? Would it have taken them thousands of years for their revolution? Perhaps we missed some essential bits and pieces from back then, all because someone did not pass them down. Writing down findings also releases a considerable burden on ourselves: our brain. One limiting factor for humans is how much we can memorize or recall. Why would it have taken thousands of years? Most likely because bits of information get lost due to human error. Nowadays, with all our resources available, we will not need to memorize what it is, but where it is.

I am afraid I have to disagree with Levi-Strauss stating that human intelligence fluctuates. I do not think the human race would have reached this far if it fluctuated; we develop faster and become progressively more innovative as new tools and ideas appear. A prime example would be technology. The current technology is a hundred times better than we had 60 years ago. If writing had been discovered earlier, who knows how far we would have come as the human race right now?

In Levi-Strauss's essay, he noted down how the tribe leader had used to act of "writing" to show power and influence over his tribe. The leader did not know how to write as a form of intellect; he showcased a sense of power and authority to the tribe. This moment was when Levi-Strauss got his first glimpse of the thought: Writing facilitates enslavement. People do not write for their intellectual gain but to gain a sense of power and influence. He further states that knowing how to write means that there will be no excuses for the law. However, this is not the case. During the Qin dynasty in China, the government burned books because people were getting too educated. This shows that knowing how to read does not bind people to the law; it makes people aware of their surroundings. Laws exist for a reason; Without laws would make an anarchy system in which people could do whatever they want. Robberies, murders, and kidnappings would happen much more often. Laws exist so that people can live in peace and equality. Understanding the laws allow people to know what is just and unjust, what is fair and unfair. Knowing why the laws exist enables the citizens to identify why a law was placed: for political reasons or the sake of the citizens. Suppose the government had to burn the books because people were getting too educated. Isn't that a good thing that people could identify a corrupt and unjust government? This example does not show that the laws bind people.

Furthermore, even though the tribe leader used writing to show power and influence without knowing how to write, this does not mean he used writing as a form of social gain. Levi-Strauss failed to perceive that learning the basics of how to "write" is also some form of intellectual advancement. The same applies to modern-day society as well. Some might argue how the tribe leader's sense of authority from knowing how to write is connected to our modern social hierarchy. People who know more than others tend to achieve more in life. In this case, the tribe leader had more knowledge than the rest of the tribe: writing. It is the same in our modern-day social hierarchy as well; People who know how one skill more than others achieve more. One who knows how to program would do well in life. However, one who knows how to program and market himself would do even better. The accumulation of knowledge helps us in life, same with the tribe leader, who has accumulated knowledge the other tribe members do not have.

"Enslavement" is a strong word. Moreover, I do not think that we are enslaved in any form or way. In Levi-Strauss's case, it is justified for him to believe that books "enslave" us as human beings, telling us what we must do in a specific situation. Levi-Strauss had two life-threatening conditions where what was written down in the book he read was different from reality. One was when he thought the tribe's men were preparing for combat because the women and children had not been seen. That was what was written down in the book. However, in reality, what happened was that the tribe wanted to move, so they let the women and children move first so the men could catch up to them later on and meet at a central point. The second time he doubted the writings was when he got lost in the forest. It was said to put off a flare whenever he had gone lost. However, even though he shot off a flare, he was still not rescued. How he was rescued came down to the tribe members, whom the books stated were "uneducated." We can argue that what is written down in the books is not 100% accurate. This is true. However, it does give people some insight into what they should do. Some information is better than no information. Maybe the book Levi-Strauss had read gave him the wrong information. This may be due to regional differences. Levi-Strauss is French, so we can assume that the book he bought was from France. In comparison, the exhibition was in the amazonian jungle. So a book in France would not be accurate in another region. How many people have been saved by the book in the European area? We cannot overlook how many people have been saved because it did not work for a single person. Back to what was stated, the books should give an insight instead of specific instructions. We cannot rely on books, but we can get particular ideas or techniques from reading them.

On page 293, Levi-Strauss states that the development of compulsory education goes hand in hand with their military services and more people being forced into wage labor. Levi-Strauss believed that the government uses this to create authority over the citizens. However, isn't this how we should live? We cannot expect to take whatever we want and live by our own rules. We have to give back to society as much as we have taken. Yes, one could argue that our education is a pyramid scheme that repeats its process from generation to generation. Nonetheless, education prepares us for what is more to come later in life. We will eventually have to find a way to earn a living. We have advanced as a human race to where we don't have to hunt for our food. The primitive forms of living are mostly gone. We have to adapt to our new society. Furthermore, the government does not force its authority upon us. Having waged labor is just what is required to survive.

Being able to write also brings all sorts of benefits. Before the invention of mobile devices, humans lacked a way to communicate over long distances; Communication is one of the major frameworks in our society. Being able to communicate effectively is the key to development. People needed a way to communicate. This is where letters help a lot. We can argue that signaling with fire or using landmarks as communication also helps us. However, these aren't accurate means of communication and are easily affected by external factors such as winds and wildlife. What is written down means what is written down, and the only factor which allows for miscommunication is ones understanding of the language.

One more unneglectable part about writing is how one conveys their emotions to one another. Would it be the same if we didn't have authors writing down their feelings on books? It would be different if we had only heard from history books and stories. However, by reading books, we understand how one author feels and what their thoughts are: anger, sadness, hopelessness, and love. Knowing how a figure feels enables many historians to picture what has happened during a specific time accurately. This also allowed us to advance further from learning from previous statistics and not repeat the same mistakes we have made.

In short, Levi-Strauss has a solid argument on why he thinks writing is enslavement. However, he also failed to look at different perspectives on writing. Many benefits we take for granted today may not have been possible without writing, including safe, sanitary water and electricity we have used daily. Knowing how to write has allowed the human race to live in the society we have now; it also enables us to communicate effectively and understand each other's emotions. Writing allows us to live life how we have and will give us the freedom we currently have.