OLYMPIADS SCHOOL/GRADE 9 AND 10 WRITING/HOMEWORK 3

NAME (FIRST AND LAST):_____ GRADE:____

REVIEW: THE ESSENTIALS OF A PARAGRAPH
(Adapted from Teresa D. O'Donnell and Judith L. Paiva's *Independent Writing*)
Read the following paragraph that contains *facts* (figures and statistics that can be proven or verified):

> Mount Everest was first surveyed in 1852, when it was found to be the highest mountain in the world. First, it was measured to be 29,000 feet. Later, however, someone added two feet so the height would not appear to be a round number estimate. In 1954, another team surveyed and reported the mountain to be 29,028 feet. No matter which figure is used, there is no doubt that no other mountain peak in the world is as high as Mount Everest.

What is the topic/main idea of the paragraph?_____

Does the topic sentence have a word or phrase that controls the idea of the paragraph?

_____

What are the main supporting ideas?

1._____

2._____

What are the logical connectors used? _____

Is there a conclusion?_____

Read the following paragraph that contains *description*:

> I'll never forget the first time I saw a traditional Christmas tree. As a small child, I thought that it was the most beautiful thing that I had ever seen. I was first attracted by the bright red and green lights that seemed to sparkle all over. Then, as I drew closer to the tree, my eyes focused on what looked like miniature wooden toys hanging from coloured strings and ribbons. Next to those tiny miniatures were glass balls of many different colours reflecting the lights of the tree; some of them were also painted with pictures of people dancing in the snow or skating on ponds. At the tip of each branch, someone had carefully hung a tiny candy cane, a treat to dazzle any small child, and under the tree was a tiny village with lighted houses and sleigh pulled by reindeer and Santa Claus sitting in it. Most memorable of all, at the top of the tree was the most beautiful sight for my small eyes: a golden angel with silver threads in her white, flowing hair.

What is the topic/main idea of the paragraph?_____

Does the topic sentence have a word or phrase that controls the idea of the paragraph?

_____

What are the main supporting ideas?

1._____

2._____

3._____

4._____

5._____

6._____

What are the logical connectors used? _____

_____

Is there a conclusion?_____

IDENTIFYING IRELEVANT OR OFF-TOPIC SENTENCES
Each sentence in a paragraph supports the topic. Unrelated sentences may distract or confuse the reader. Read the following paragraph and draw a line through any off-topic sentence. Sometimes off-topic sentences seem to be related, but closer analysis reveals that they are related to other supporting sentences rather than directly to the topic sentence.

Life is a little war every day. When I mention "war," I am not talking about a conflict between two nations; I am talking about our own everyday existence. Sometimes our days are simply wonderful. From the time we get up in the morning to the time we go back to bed, we have to face many problems. I usually go to bed at 11:00 every night. For example, you get home at 6:30 p.m.; you are tired and hungry, but you have to make dinner. Food prices are skyrocketing these days. The baby starts crying and you start to get nervous about all of this. They say that being nervous can cause heart attacks. My cousin, who is a doctor, says that many people have heart disease. Then your spouse has an evening meeting, so you are left alone with a fussy baby. You would really rather sit quietly and read the newspaper, but you know it is your duty to amuse your child. This is the moment when you have to face that little war to fight your nervous system and control yourself.

READING COMPREHENSION AND VOCABULARY
http://www.theguardian.com/media-network/media-network-blog/2014/mar/13/selfie-social-media-love-digital-narcassism

Sharing the (self) love: the rise of the selfie and digital narcissism
Social media and the internet are making us more narcissistic, but can this trend be reversed?

Ellen Degeneres selfie at the Oscars

Ellen Degeneres takes a selfie with stars at the Oscars 2014. Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic asks, are we becoming more narcassistic as a society because of social media? Photograph: Ellen Degeneres/AP
Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic
Thursday 13 March 2014 14.15 GMT Last modified on Friday 24 October 2014 08.23 BST

What do Kanye West, Kim Kardashian, and Justin Bieber have in common?
Grandiose exhibitionism, inflated self-views, superficial personalities and shameless self-promotion. In that sense, they are just like millions of their Facebook and Twitter fans around the world, except successful.

Welcome to the age of digital narcissism, a world of endless ostentation opportunities and unlimited bragging possibilities. Showing-off has never been easier and, ironically, more celebrated.

Until the 90s, the media provided an escape from reality by transporting consumers to the fictional universe of sitcoms, soap operas and series. Then came reality TV, which turned our attention back to ourselves by broadcasting the allegedly genuine and ultra-**mundane** lives of everyday people, upgrading trash TV to a cultural blockbuster: couch potatoes watching couch potatoes. In the past decade, social media has taken us to unchartered territories of egotistic adulation by enabling everybody to broadcast their life and be the star of their own 24/7 hour show: consumers became actors and consumable products at once.

It is noteworthy that digital exhibitionism and inappropriate self-disclosure have been at the core of every mega-successful app and website. It all begun with MySpace, a directory for wannabe pop stars and DJ's. Then came Facebook, the encyclopaedia of common people. YouTube gave everybody their own TV channel, Blogger and Tumblr made us all creative writers. Twitter brought in tons of followers and LinkedIn

positive endorsements – because who cares about our faults? Instagram made selfie the word of the year, while Tinder – the ultimate dating tool for narcissists – and Snapchat – the bastion of ephemeral sexting – make Facebook look intellectual. And if your concern is to remain connected after death, there is a whole movement, the digital afterlife industry, dedicated to the preservation of your narcissistic social media activity after you die. As Liveson's slogan puts it, "when your heart stops beating, just keep tweeting".

Unsurprisingly, **narcissism** levels have been rising for decades. Such increases pre-date social media but they have clearly **exacerbated** since its emergence. At the same time, there has been a steep decline in **altruism** and empathy levels since the advent of Facebook and Twitter. We are now more connected than ever, but also less interested in other people, except when it comes to finding out what they think about us. It is as if being closer to others made us more antisocial. Freud, who would no doubt have thousands of Twitter followers today (if he could sum-up his views in 140-characters), referred to this as the "hedgehog dilemma". That is, humans are like hedgehogs in the winter: they need to get close to each other to cope with the cold, but they cannot get too close without hurting each other with their spines.

Needless to say, most social media users are not narcissistic. Yet, social media is to narcissists what crack is to crack addicts: the more narcissistic you are, the heavier your social media use is. Indeed, scientific studies have shown that the number of status updates, attractive selfies, check-ins, followers and friends, are all positively correlated with narcissism, as is the tendency to accept invites from strangers, particularly when they are attractive. The reason for these correlations is that narcissistic individuals are much more likely to use social media to portray a desirable, albeit unrealistic, self-image, accumulate virtual friends and broadcast their life to an audience. Klout is a better measure of narcissism than of social reach.

Sure, there's nothing wrong with seeking others' approval – a healthy identity actually depends on paying careful attention to what others think of us. Furthermore, the need to be appreciated is a cornerstone of both psychological wellbeing and living in civilisation. When taken too far, however, the desire to be accepted morphs into a relentless quest for status, which undermines other people and **impairs** our ability to build and maintain happy relationships and successful careers.

The big problem with the rise of digital narcissism is that it puts enormous pressure on people to achieve **unfeasible** goals, without making them hungrier. Wanting to be Beyoncé or Jay Z is hard enough already, but when you are not prepared to work hard to achieve it, you are better off just lowering your aspirations. Few things are more self-destructive than a combination of high entitlement and a lazy work ethic. Ultimately, online manifestations of narcissism may be little more than a self-presentational strategy to compensate for a low and fragile self-esteem. Yet when these efforts are reinforced and rewarded by others, they **perpetuate** the distortion of reality and consolidate narcissistic delusions.

Perhaps it is time to turn social media into a therapeutic tool, at the service of the public and society. Online behavioural analysis is important not just to personalise media content and serve more relevant ads, but also to educate consumers. What better way to achieve this than to provide accurate feedback on their mental well-being?

We have already seen impressive examples for the social utility of big data, from predicting flue epidemics to diagnosing cancer. But how about examining the rise of narcissism? This could be done both at an individual and population level. Algorithms could be built into Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to alert users about their growing grandiosity, excessive self-promotion, **pathological** self-love and even signal when an entire population might be at risk of becoming too self-obsessed for its own sake. Or is it too late?

The following sentences are from the article above. Guess the meaning of the underlined words based on the context of the sentence or of the article as a whole. Explain your inference. Then refer to a dictionary and copy down the word's definition.

1. **Grandiose** exhibitionism, inflated self-views, superficial personalities and shameless self-promotion.

Your inference and explanation:_____

_____

Dictionary's definition:_____

_____

2. Then came reality TV, which turned our attention back to ourselves by broadcasting the allegedly genuine and ultra-**mundane** lives of everyday people, upgrading trash TV to a cultural blockbuster: couch potatoes watching couch potatoes.

Your inference and explanation:_____

_____

Dictionary's definition:_____

_____

3. Unsurprisingly, **narcissism** levels have been rising for decades.

Your inference and explanation:_____

_____

Dictionary's definition:_____

_____

4. Such increases pre-date social media but they have clearly **exacerbated** since its emergence.

Your inference and explanation:_____

_____

Dictionary's definition:_____

_____

5. At the same time, there has been a steep decline in **altruism** and empathy levels since the advent of Facebook and Twitter.

Your inference and explanation:_____

_____

Dictionary's definition:_____

_____

6. When taken too far, however, the desire to be accepted morphs into a relentless quest for status, which undermines other people and **impairs** our ability to build and maintain happy relationships and successful careers.

Your inference and explanation:_____

_____

Dictionary's definition:_____

_____

7. The big problem with the rise of digital narcissism is that it puts enormous pressure on people to achieve **unfeasible** goals, without making them hungrier.

Your inference and explanation:_____

_____

Dictionary's definition:_____

_____

8. Yet when these efforts are reinforced and rewarded by others,
they **perpetuate** the distortion of reality and consolidate narcissistic delusions.

Your inference and explanation:_____

_____

Dictionary's definition:_____

_____

9. Algorithms could be built into Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to alert users
about their growing grandiosity, excessive self-promotion, **pathological** self-love
and even signal when an entire population might be at risk of becoming
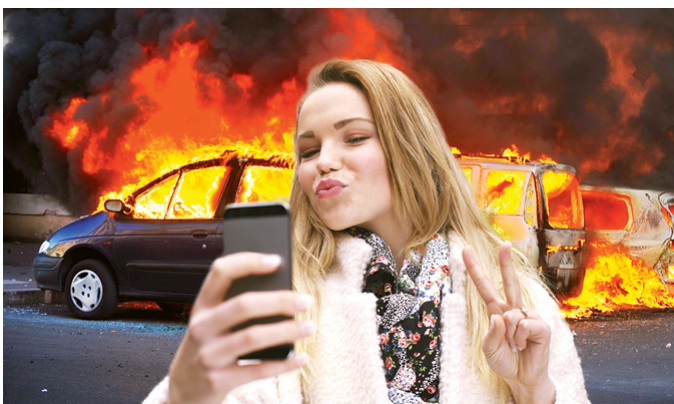
Your inference and explanation:_____

_____

Dictionary's definition:_____

_____

Read the following selection and write a paragraph about whether there is indeed a
selfie culture that is going out of control.
http://choices.scholastic.com/story/debate-selfie-culture-out-control

## Debate: Is Selfie Culture Out of Control?

Kaitlin Menza

Has teens' selfie habit gone too far? Two teens weigh in.

iStockPhoto/Getty Images

Whether it's to show off a new haircut or cool vacation, posting your face on social media is practically a reflex. But with a whole Tumblr dedicated to "Selfies at Serious Places"—like funerals (cringe!)—some say selfie-mania is turning us into a nation of narcissists. So we asked two teens: Is selfie culture helping our self-esteem or sentencing us to lives of self-obsession?

YES: Stop seeking attention and approval by posting selfies.
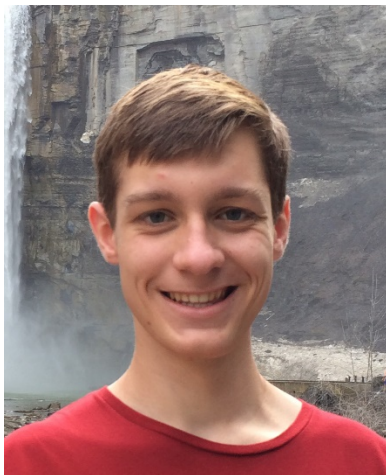
The selfie phenomenon might seem like a meaningless fad, but it has gone way too far! Pictures are supposed to solidify a special moment forever, but the proliferation of selfies has devalued the power of a photograph. People seem to think that any moment is a moment worthy of immortalizing. It's not!

Selfies also highlight the growing narcissism of our generation. We all seem to think we're important, and our selfies are a way to beg for attention. In fact, I've seen friends get so caught up in getting a selfie that they are outright disrespectful, ignoring everyone and everything around them!

Remember, the emotional boost we get from earning "likes" is temporary. Try to get that same feeling by creating an awesome memory—then you've captured a mental photo you can treasure forever.

—Alex Hager, 17, a high school senior from Darien, CT

NO: Selfies are a powerful tool for self-expression.

I'm sick of hearing that selfies are a dangerous trend! They're a beautiful form of self-expression, allowing us to share emotions like joy or despair.

Most important, though, selfies improve self-esteem—and not because of "likes." The biggest boost comes from seeing people with different body types, hairstyles, skin tones, and fashion senses. They enrich your image of what people really look like (unique!)—as opposed to seeing only what the media shows you.

—Isabel Song, 17, a high school senior from Colorado Springs, CO

THREE FAST FACTS

1. Use of the word "selfie" in the English language went up 17,000 percent between 2012 and 2013.

2. As this issue went to press, there were 189 million posts on Instagram with the tag #selfie.

3.Pictures with human faces are 38 percent more likely to receive likes than photos with no faces. They're also 32 percent more likely to attract comments.

Sources: 1. Oxford English Dictionary; 2. Instagram's Explore function; 3. a 2014 study by researchers at Georgia Institute of Technology and Yahoo Labs.

What do you think? Does a selfie culture exist, and if it does, is it going out of control? Write a coherent paragraph.

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THE END