Issue 官方主题范文 60 篇

来源：ETS

Issue test1

"Both the development of technological tools and the uses to which humanity has put them have created modern civilizations in which loneliness is ever increasing."

6

Technology, broadly defined as the use of tools, has a long history.   Ever since Erg the caveman first conked an animal with a rock, people have been using technology.   For thousands of years, the use of tools allowed people to move ever closer together.   Because fields could be cultivated and the technology to store food existed, people would live in cities rather than in small nomadic tribes.   Only very lately have Erg's descendants come to question the benefits of technology.   The Industrial Revolution introduced and spread technologies that mechanized many tasks.   As a result of the drive toward more efficient production and distribution (so

the ever larger cities would be supported), people began to act as cogs in the technological machine. Clothing was no longer produced by groups of women sewing and gossiping together, but by down-trodden automation's operating machinery in grim factories.

The benefits of the new technology of today, computers and the internet, are particularly ambiguous. They have made work ever more efficient and knit the world together in a web of information and phone lines. Some visionaries speak of a world in which Erg need not check in to his office; he can just dial in from home. He won't need to go to a bar to pick up women because there are all those chat rooms. Hungry? Erg orders his groceries from an online delivery service. Bored? Download a new game. And yet...

Many people, myself included, are a little queasy about that vision. Erg may be doing work, but is it real work? Are his online friends real friends? Does anything count in a spiritual way if it's just digital? Since the Industrial Revolution, we have been haunted by the prospect

that we are turning into our machines: efficient, productive, soulless. The newest technologies, we fear, are making us flat as our screens, turning us into streams of bits of interchangeable data. We may know a lot of people, but we have few real friends. We have a lot of things to do, but no reason to do them. In short, the new technology emphasizes a spiritual crisis that has been building for quite some time.

As I try to unravel which I believe about the relative merits of technology, I think it is instructive to remember technology's original result. A better plow meant easier farming, more food, longer lives, and more free time to pursue other things such as art. Our newest technology does not give us more free time; it consumes our free time. We are terminally distracted from confronting ourselves or each other. We stay safe, and lonely, in our homes and offices rather than taking the risk of meeting real people or trying new things.

While I am certainly not a Luddite, I do believe we need to look for a bit more balance between technology and life. We have to tear ourselves

away from the fatal distractions and go out into the world. Technology has given us long lives and endless supplies of information. Now we need to apply that information, use the time we're not spending conking our dinner with a club, and find our reasons for living.

COMMENTARY

This outstanding response displays cogent reasoning, insightful, persuasive analysis, and superior control of language. The essay immediately identifies the complexities of the issue and then playfully explores both the benefits and the drawbacks of technological developments over the course of human history. The writer maintains that a "balance between technology and life" is necessary if humans are going to abate the loneliness that is part of modern existence.

5

I disagree with the argument that "Both the development of technological tools and the uses to which humanity has put them have created modern civilizations in which loneliness is ever increasing."" Arguments can be made for this thesis, but they depend largely upon what I believe to be a poor definition of "loneliness".

If one defines loneliness as the absence of as much physical, face-to-face contact with other people, then this argument is probably true. The invention of modern telecommunications devices such as telephones, fax machines, and computers has definitely cut down on the amount of physical contact with other people. This is especially true in recent times due to the extremely rapid expansion of the Internet. E-mail and tele-conferencing are direct substitutes for physical contact, especially in the business world.

However, I believe that loneliness can be better measured by intellectual contact with other individuals.   Unarguably, modern technology makes this faster and easier, with better communication with a larger number of people.   Some employers have argued that productivity is lessened since they have had computers linked to the Internet, as the employees spend much of their time "chatting" with friends, acquaintances, or business contacts across the country.   This is probably not a good thing for the employers, but it demonstrates the increased degree of communication due to modern technology.

Of course, some technologies have increased loneliness by any standards, such as the automobile or other transportation mechanisms.   These encourage substantially longer commutes between home and work. Automobiles have made possible the pattern of suburbanization that has been in place in the United States since immediately after World War Two. Time spent commuting is generally unproductive and spent alone, unless the individual in question is car-pooling or using mass transit.   The contribution of the commuting culture to loneliness may actually be changing now due to new technology that is being invented and used by

the general public.   Popular new devices, such as the cellular phone, the laptop computer, and the combination thereof may actually convert commuting time to a period of increased communications between people, to "pass the time".   This will be especially true as use of mass transit grows, which will probably happen, due to problems with gas shortages, air pollution, and the creation of further mass transit by federal and local governments.

The motivation for the declaration that loneliness is increasing may be due to the fact that many people, especially blue-collar workers, are unable to afford or use these new devices.   However, since the advent of the personal computer, the price per computing power has continually lowered rapidly, and this trend shows no sign of changing.   Several companies, such as Sun Microsystems and Oracle have announced that they are attempting to develop terminals with little computing power, but a full capability to access the Internet.   These devices will be in approximately the $500 price range, which is much more reasonable than the price of the current top of the line PC.   In addition, to cater to a larger mass of the public, software companies have been carefully making their products easier to use by non-"computer nerds".   This trend

is not likely to cease.

In conclusion, although early development of modern transportation may have increased loneliness, I believe that more recent technologies are actually doing the opposite, stimulating interpersonal contact and encouraging intellectual expansion. The perception that the opposite is true derives from what I believe is poor definition of loneliness and the difficulty that the working class has in acquiring and using modern telecommunications devices.
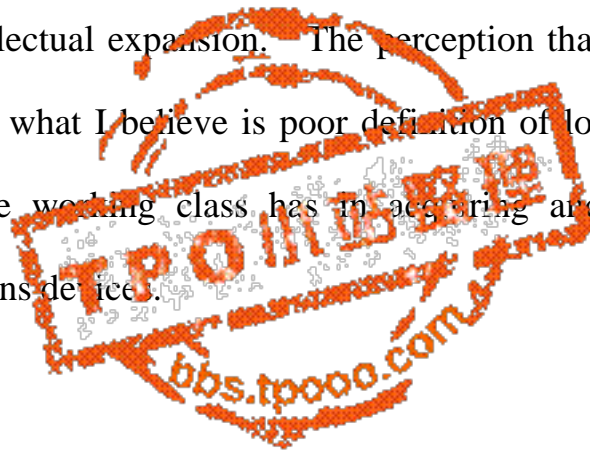
COMMENTARY

This strong response analyzes the complexities of the issue. In disagreeing with the prompt, the writer makes a distinction between two types of loneliness -- loneliness caused by "the absence of??? physical contact" and loneliness brought about by a lack of "intellectual contact"

with others. The essay reasons that while "the automobile and other transportation mechanisms" originally kept passengers physically and intellectually isolated from one another, modern technology, such as the cellular telephone and laptop computer, has made intellectual contact "faster and easier" and has benefited users by allowing them to communicate with "a larger number of people."

The response provides clear and relevant examples of the ways in which technological developments facilitate and encourage intellectual communication. The writer examines the impact of user-friendly Internet access on the individual's ability to interact with others even when physical distance separates the communicating parties.

The organization is clear, yet transitions between paragraphs are not always smooth. The body of the essay lacks the focus that would help move it to a score of 6. It is not always clear how the information given relates to the essay's initial position (e.g., the discussion of current prices for personal computers in paragraph five). The conclusion, while

clearly relevant, attempts to impose order on the somewhat loosely connected paragraphs, yet fails to add substance to the analysis.

On the whole, the essay displays clarity and control, but the language is sometimes imprecise and less tightly controlled than it would be in a 6 essay. The following sentence is one such example: "The motivation for the declaration that loneliness is increasing may be due to the fact that many people, especially blue-collar workers, are unable to afford or use these new devices."

Issue test2

"The media (books, film, music, television, for example) tend to create rather than reflect the values of a society."

6

For our grandparents it occurred through films and books.   For the baby boomers it was a result of television and revolutionary music.   No

matter how the impact took place, it is clear that since its very advent, the media have played a crucial role in not simply being representative of the values of our society but creating them as well.

During the roaring twenties Americans found themselves in a struggle between the old ways of their ancestors and the new ways of the future. The once steadfast beliefs that men and women should not touch while dancing, and that ladies should not drink or smoke were suddenly being challenged. From where was all this rebellion stemming? Partly it was due to the returning doughboys from the shores of Europe bringing home revolutionary ideas they had encountered while at war. Nonetheless, returning soldiers could not be held responsible for the social upheaval that America experienced. There had to be another cause, and there was, the media. Although the films of the era were silent they spoke volumes to the society for which they were created. Women in these movies wore their hemlines a few inches shorter than the decade before them and they wore cosmetics to accentuate their new bobbed haircuts. The movies, as well as the books of that era, demonstrated a new materialistic attitude that America had never before experienced. Films portrayed every character as having the money to buy a new car, drink, smoke and

partake in the leisure's of life, a philosophy that was soon adopted by the youth of the decade. The use of the media in the twenties was to serve as a catalyst for the revolutionary ideas that were circulating. The films and books of that era sped America along its path of change that eventually led to the greatest social unrest that the United States had ever known.

Unlike the twenties, the sixties and seventies utilized the media in a way that appealed to those reaching for truth in a lost and confused world. Martin Luther King Jr. realized the impact of the media on society during his campaign for civil rights. King urged his followers to withstand any abuse that they might encounter because the media will take their peacefulness into the homes of their society. By doing so, King successfully began to change the traditional view of race. Americans began to sympathize with the protesters because of the undeserved turmoil they faced at the hands of the government. As a result, America relinquished the Jim Crow laws and saw many other groups press for their individual rights as well. Television cameras rolled as Cesar Chavez organized the migrant workers in California and as Bella Abzug and Gloria Steinham linked arms to protest the lack of

women's rights.

While the media helped to shape some attitudes about racism and gender it also helped to uncover the truth behind government lies.   During the Nixon

COMMENTARY

This is an outstanding response, even though it is not quite finished. The writer's views on the issue are so cogent, well articulated, and well developed that the writer was not penalized for failing to provide a conclusion.   What matters is the quality of thinking and writing displayed, not whether an essay is totally finished or has a certain number of words.

The writer's skill is apparent in the opening lines.   The first words, "For our grandparents it occurred," immediately spark the reader's interest.   The quick repetition of sentence structure and, once again, the intentionally vague use of "it" ("For the baby boomers it was") effectively draw the reader in.   By the third sentence, we know that this essay will address the complexity of the issue ("not simply being representative??? but creating them as well") and that the writer is fully in command of this discussion.

The rest of the essay addresses the influence of historical events and media on the values of modern society, from the "roaring twenties" to the "sixties and seventies."   Insightful analysis accompanies the historical references.   For example, the writer persuasively argues that prominent figures (King, but also Chavez, Abzug, and Steinham) advanced their social agendas by capitalizing on the power of the media to change public opinion.

Throughout the essay, the writer uses language and syntax effectively. Word choice is precise ("cosmetics to accentuate their new bobbed haircuts"), sentences are structured to communicate ideas clearly ("There had to be another cause, and there was, the media"), and transitional phrases help move the argument forward ("Unlike the twenties, the sixties????" and "By doing so, King successfully began to change the traditional view of race.")

Occasional errors do appear (e.g., note the lack of logical comparison in "women??? wore their hemlines??? shorter than the decade before them"), but they are not intrusive.

Other 6 essays might be more fully developed; indeed, this essay would be stronger if the writer had gone on to discuss the media's role in Nixon's Watergate scandal and to bring the argument to its conclusion. However, even in its unfinished state, the essay does present an insightful, well-articulated discussion of the issue.

5、

There are some who would say that the media reflects the values of society.   I believe however, that the media in fact tend to create values in a society.   The values created may be far different from the values that our society would choose to embrace.   I offer two examples that serve well to illustrate that the media can in fact shape the very moral fibers in our society.

The first medium that comes to mind is music.   Through music we can proclaim our love, communicate feelings, and express new attitudes. Music is widely available to almost everyone in our society.   To see how music has changed the values of our society, one needs only to look   to

the urban sprawl. Rap and gangster styles of music reach millions of city teens and young adults. It's message is quite simple- violence, drugs, and sex . Young people are constantly bombarded with the message that if you want something all you have to do is to take it. The values of human life, respect for elders and children have been lost. We have gangs and random killings in the streets of most cities in our country. Are these my values? They are most certainly not. This music does not reflect the values of this society. This music is the very core of this degradation of our values. How many tricked out gang cars to you see that don't have the annoying bass rumble of Rap music vibrating out of them? This music is part of the persona of a whole generation of people. It is just as much a part of their ego as the guns, drugs, and abuse of women. Another medium that is shaping the values of our society is advertising.

Advertising is everywhere, on T.V., billboards, radio, even at the ballpark. Through advertising some vendors can create "values". To illuminate my point I will use tobacco companies as an example. Joe Camel has convinced millions of young people that it is cool to smoke. The Marlboro man has done the same. The audience is always the same.

These ads are targeting young people. They have created the "value" among children that it is ok for kids to smoke. Again the values of society have been changed by a powerful media. I'm sure there are not too many parents out there who would want their children to start smoking. Another advertising media that will surely change the values of ours society is the Internet.

The internet is really just the world's largest commercial launched under the veil of access of useful information. It will be interesting to see just how this new network that has brought the world together will affect our values. These are just examples but I think they are effective at making my point. I think they serve to illustrate that the media can in fact change our values. As for me, I'll be out back smoking a Don Lino, on a beautiful trout stream while sipping a cold beer, waiting for the trout to rise and hoping a couple of those girls from the Coors commercial show up.

COMMENTARY

This is a well-developed response. The four-paragraph organizational structure serves as a useful framework for the writer to develop a position on the issue.

The opening paragraph presents the writer's position ("media in fact tend to create values in a society") and announces the plan to present two examples to support that position.

As promised, two examples (music and advertising) follow in the next two paragraphs. The discussion of these examples is focused, relevant, and clear. Using vivid details and an emphatic writing style, the writer shows how music (especially rap and gnats music) and advertising (especially cigarette ads) have negatively influenced American values.

The final paragraph is an extension of the advertising example, focusing on the Internet as part of the advertising system. While the writer does little more than speculate on the influence that the Internet might have, this point does lead the reader to the writer's lively conclusion. The vivid picture of the writer enjoying the media-defined good life ("smoking a Don Lino??? while sipping a cold beer") effectively illustrates the writer's position that the media do, indeed, influence people in our society.

Overall, the reasoning is persuasive and the examples are well chosen, but the argument lacks the insight and cogency necessary for a score of 6.

The ideas in the essay are expressed clearly, although precision of language is not a strong feature. Sentences are generally well formed, often adding "punch" to the writer's views. Some sentences are unnecessary, especially those that belabor the obvious ("These are just examples but I think they are effective at making my point. I think they

serve to illustrate that the media can in fact change our values.")
Overall, however, the writing is representative of a 5 essay.

Issue test 3

"Our declining environment may bring the people of the world together as no politician, philosopher, or war ever could. Environmental problems are global in scope and respect no nation's boundaries. Therefore, people are faced with the choice of unity and cooperation on the one hand or disunity and a common tragedy on the other."

6、

Cooperation---or Tragedy?

The solution to the world's growing environmental problems may have to wait awhile. It has been said that "environmental problems are global and respect no nation's boundaries."　Unfortunately, pollution and its consequences still fall to large measure on those least likely to do anything about it: poor countries willing to sacrifice anything in order to sit at the table with the world's wealthy.

As far as the industrialized nations of the world are concerned, the world is a big place. Environmental destruction taking place outside their borders may sometimes be fodder for government pronouncements of concern, but few concrete actions.　Deforestation of the Amazon, for instance, is of vital concern to all those who wish to continue breathing. But the only effective deterrent to this activity,　the restriction of international aid money to those countries showing net deforestation, has been stalled in the United Nations by those unwilling to "interfere" in the internal politics of other nations.

Because of the differential impact of polluting activities around the world, and even in different regions of a single country, many governments will undoubtedly continue to promulgate only modest environmental regulations. Costs to polluting companies will continue to carry as much weight as the benefit of a pollution-free environment. Particularly in the current political climate of the United States, the well-documented expense of today's pollution-control measures will be stacked against the unknown long-term effects of polluting actitivities. "Why should I spend millions of dollars a year, which causes me to have to raise the cost of my goods or eliminate jobs, if no one really knows if air pollution is all that harmful? Show me the proof, " an air polluting company may demand.

Realistically,   it won't be until critical mass is achieved that   the hoped for "choice of unity and cooperation" will be a viable one. Only when the earth as a whole is so polluted that life itself becomes increasingly difficult for a majority of the world's people will there likely be the political will to force global environmental laws on governments

worldwide. But the optimists (read: environmental activists) among us continue to believe that the world can be shown the error of its ways. They continue to point out that the sky is probably falling--or at least developing a big hole. The world, as a whole, ignores them.

One would hope, however, that governments, perhaps through a strengthened U.N., could somehow be forced to realize that when the Earth reaches the critical mass of pollution, it may be too late to do anything about it. That would be a "common tragedy" indeed.

COMMENTARY

This excellent response displays an in-depth analysis of the issue and superior facility with language.

While acknowledging that environmental problems are serious and of global dimensions, the essay explores the complexity of international cooperation. Such cooperation, the essay argues, runs into a variety of problems, and the writer offers persuasive examples to support that point:

-- the unwillingness of nations to "interfere" with other nations through political measures such as restriction of foreign aid

-- inadequate environmental regulations, which are caused both by "the differential impact of polluting activities" between countries and regions and by the difficulty of comparing the "long-term effects of polluting activities" with the more easily documented, short-term costs of reducing pollution.

The essay distinguishes itself in part by its excellent organization. The

first paragraph analyzes the claim and announces the writer's position; the second and third paragraphs provide clear examples supporting that position.   The skillful use of a quotation from a business person vividly illustrates the economic impact of pollution controls.   The last two paragraphs bring a sense of closure to the essay by continuing the theme announced in the first paragraph -- that cooperation must wait until more dire circumstances produce the political will necessary to reduce pollution.

The essay exhibits superior control of grammar and syntax, with only minor errors.   Transitional phrases -- "because," "however," "for instance" -- help guide the reader through the argument.   Also, effective sentence variety and the use of precise word choice help confirm the score of 6.

5、At no other time then in our present time has the need for unity and togetherness been more necessary to the inhabitants on our planet. For many decades the motto has been one of waste and denial. The world is in a race - racing to become number one - racing to destroy the earth. Traditions of protecting the earth have been abandoned as the need to satisfy infantile needs and desires wins out over the more philosophical desires of thought and meaning. Unfortunately many do not see the need for reforms in actions and thought; people are living for today and not tomorrow. Those that can believe in a future, and exhibit a desire to make a difference in this future must find a way to influence the remaining masses, and often it seems that the world simply refused to listen or learn from its past mistakes.

Those that answer this calling will not do so for notoriety, but instead for their beliefs that they can make a difference. They will need to be of strong heart, body, soul, and beliefs. Understanding the need for an overhaul in our system in the rampant abuses is the first step to obtaining advancement in the struggle to bring the world together in a way that will

benefit mankind today and tomorrow.

For too many years American's have persuaded themselves that the environment was in no danger. Every year laws have been passed to protect our land, animals, and even our people. More often than not there are loopholes in these laws, allowing the environment to remain in peril. It seems that we often forget that we are not the only ones on earth. We are only a small percentage, and much too often our actions have a great effect on those that must subsist on this earth as well. One threatening example of this is the depletion of the rain forests in the Central and South Americas. It seems difficult for Americans to understand how these people can destroy their natural landscapes. Not only is the landscaped destroyed and the invaluable plants and animal life are also destroyed, and these can never be recovered. Americans express their annoyance at such practices, failing to see that we as consumers are one of the main causes of such actions. As a consumer society we depend on wood and other materials from these areas. Unfortunately these areas are nothing like what we see at home, instead it is a world of unimaginable poverty and harshness. In these areas where poverty is so prevalent often the only means of survival is found through

the clearing of the precious rain forest for farm land. Certainly the fact that these people are farming in order to maintain their survival is important and can not be over looked. Yet, in most cases the farming is not done as a means of raising food and livestock for their own uses. This land is usually used to grow food for other countries such as America. This scenario depicts the wickedness that has become of our world. The first world nations are destroying the second and third world nations in order to fuel our excessive desires.

The world must find a way to come together so that there will be a tomorrow for everyone. New legislation must be passed that protects not only the environment of America, but the environments of other countries. Big business must also realize that they can no longer use dirty legislation and kickbacks to continue to pollute the earth.

Another important aspect that people must learn is that if we cannot learn to recycle and reduce waste, one day we will run out of dumping ground. It is frightening to think that this is what it will to take to make most

people realize that actions must be taken to clean up our earth. It seems that we will only be able to come together when there is not other alternative. Perhaps the must unfathomable thought is, what happens if people do not unite together now to protect our environment. It can only seem that we will once again be threatened with war as we fight each other to death over the last precious miles of land and food. Civilization will have come full circle; all of our technological and scientific advances will mean nothing if the earth is destroyed and mankind subsequently wiped out with it

COMMENTARY

This is a generally well-developed essay that examines the complexities of the issue and demonstrates good control of the elements of effective writing.

The writer strongly agrees with the topic's claim and uses the first paragraph to expand on the idea that environmental problems imperil the earth. These problems, according to the writer, derive from people's lack of maturity ("infantile needs and desires") and lack of foresight ("people are living for today and not tomorrow.")

The third paragraph provides a highly relevant example of the complexities involved in the issue, showing how damage to the rainforest can be attributed both to poverty in Latin America and to the voracious appetite of the wealthy North American "consumer society." From here the writer returns to the focus on planning for "tomorrow" and proposes a specific remedy ("New legislation must be passed????") The essay closes with a passionate description of a negative scenario for the future.

The response is well organized but, unlike a 6 essay, does not sustain a tight focus. Although the example of the rain forest degradation is highly relevant and fully developed, many of the reasons and assertions receive only cursory development or explanation ("new legislation must

be passed????   It can only seem that we will once again be threatened with war????").

The sentence structure in the essay is often nicely varied ("Not only is the landscaped destroyed but????"), but it is at times choppy ("This land is????" "This scenario depicts????" "The first world nations????")

The vocabulary is generally well chosen, with words such as "depletion," "unfathomable," and "subsequently."   However, the phrasing is at times imprecise, as in these examples: "We are only a small percentage,"   and "At no other time then in our present time has the need??? been more necessary????"

Issue test 4

Sample Issue Topic

"In our time, specialists of all kinds are highly over-rated. We need more generalists — people who can provide broad perspectives."

Please note: All of these sample essays are reproduced as written, although reformatted for this document. Misspellings, typos, grammatical errors, etc. have been retained from the originals.

Benchmark 6

In this era of rapid social and technological change leading to increasing life complexity and psychological displacement, both positive and negative effects among persons in Western society call for a balance in which there are both specialists and generalists.

Specialists are necessary in order to allow society as a whole to properly and usefully assimilate the masses of new information and knowledge that have come out of research and have been widely disseminated

through mass global media. As the head of Pharmacology at my university once said (and I paraphrase): "I can only research what I do because there are so many who have come before me to whom I can turn for basic knowledge. It is only because of each of the narrowly focused individuals at each step that a full and true understanding of the complexities of life can be had. Each person can only hold enough knowledge to add one small rung to the ladder, but together we can climb to the moon." This illustrates the point that our societies level of knowledge and technology is at a stage in which there simply must be specialists in order for our society to take advantage of the information available to us.

Simply put, without specialists, our society would find itself bogged down in the Sargasso sea of information overload. While it was fine for early physicists to learn and understand the few laws and ideas that existed during their times, now, no one individual can possibly digest and assimilate all of the knowledge in any given area.

On the other hand, Over specialization means narrow foci in which people can lose the larger picture. No one can hope to understand the human body by only inspecting one's own toe-nails. What we learn from a narrow focus may be internally logically coherent but may be irrelevant

or fallacious within the framework of a broader perspective. Further, if we inspect only our toe-nails, we may conclude that the whole body is hard and white. Useful conclusions and thus perhaps useful inventions must come by sharing among specialists. Simply throwing out various discoveries means we have a pile of useless discoveries, it is only when one can make with them a mosaic that we can see that they may form a picture.

Not only may over-specialization be dangerous in terms of the truth, purity and cohesion of knowledge, but it can also serve to drown moral or universal issues. Generalists and only generalists can see a broad enough picture to realize and introduce to the world the problems of the environment. With specialization, each person focuses on their research and their goals. Thus, industrialization, expansion, and new technologies are driven ahead. Meanwhile no individual can see the holistic view of our global existence in which true advancement may mean stifling individual specialists for the greater good of all.

Finally, over-specialization in a people's daily lives and jobs has meant personal and psychological compartmentalization. People are forced into pigeon holes early in life (at least by university) and must consciously attempt to consume external forms of stimuli and information in order not

to be lost in their small and isolated universe. Not only does this make for narrowly focused and generally poorly-educated individuals, but it guarantees a sense of loss of community, often followed by a feeling of psychological displacement and personal dissatisfaction.

Without generalists, society becomes inward-looking and eventually inefficient. Without a society that recognizes the importance of broad-mindedness and for sharing generalities, individuals become isolated. Thus, while our form of society necessitates specialists, generalists are equally important. Specialists drive us forward in a series of thrusts while generalists make sure we are still on the jousting field and know what the stakes are.

Reader Comment on 6

This outstanding response displays insightful analysis, meticulous development, impressive vocabulary and a mastery of the elements of effective writing. The writer disagrees with the stated opinions by arguing that specialists and generalists are both vital: specialists prevent us from becoming "bogged down in the Sargasso sea of information overload,"

while generalists provide help to see "the big picture" and, unlike specialists, protect our "greater good."

The essay is carefully constructed throughout, enabling the reader to move effortlessly from point to point as the writer examines the multi-faceted implications of the issue and provides compelling reasons and examples to support the premise and take the argument to an effective conclusion. Although other "6" responses may not be as eloquent as this essay, they nevertheless all display the test taker's ability to articulate complex ideas effectively and precisely.

Benchmark 5

Specialists are not overrated today. More generalists may be needed, but not to overshadow the specialists. Generalists can provide a great deal of information on many topics of interest with a broad range of ideas. People who look at the overall view of things can help with some of the large problems our society faces today. But specialists are necessary to gain a better understanding of more in depth methods to solve problems

or fixing things.

One good example of why specialists are not overrated is in the medical field. Doctors are necessary for people to live healthy lives. When a person is sick, he may go to a general practitioner to find out the cause of his problems. Usually, this kind of "generalized" doctor can help most ailments with simple and effective treatments. Sometimes, though, a sickness may go beyond a family doctor's knowledge or the prescribed treatments don't work the way they should. When a sickness progresses or becomes diagnosed as a disease that requires more care than a family doctor can provide, he may be referred to a specialist. For instance, a person with constant breathing problems that require hospitalization may be suggested to visit an asthma specialist. Since a family doctor has a great deal of knowledge of medicine, he can decide when his methods are not effective and the patient needs to see someone who knows more about the specific problem; someone who knows how it begins, progresses, and specified treatments. This is an excellent example of how a generalized person may not be equipped enough to handle something as well as a specialized one can.

Another example of a specialist who is needed instead of a generalist involves teaching. In grammar school, children learn all the basic

principles of reading, writing, and arithmetic. But as children get older and progress in school, they gain a better understanding of the language and mathematical processes. As the years in school increase, they need to learn more and more specifics and details about various subjects. They start out by learning basic math concepts such as addition, subtraction, division, and multiplication. A few years later, they are ready to begin algebraic concepts, geometry, and calculus. They are also ready to learn more advanced vocabulary, the principles of how all life is composed and how it functions. One teacher or professor can not provide as much in depth discussion on all of these topics as well as one who has learned the specifics and studied mainly to know everything that is currently known about one of these subjects. Generalized teachers are required to begin molding students at a very early age so they can get ready for the future ahead of them in gaining more facts about the basic subjects and finding out new facts on the old ones.

Reader Comment on 5

The essay presents a strong analysis of the complexities of the issue.

This writer's argument is rooted in two extended examples, both of which are well chosen and effective. The example in paragraph 2 begins with a discussion of the need in the medical field for general practitioners as well as specialists and moves into an example within the example (breathing problems and the need for an asthma specialist) to illustrate the point. This extension from the general to the specific also characterizes the example in paragraph 3. Overall, the essay is well-organized, in part because the writer connects ideas through the use of appropriate transitions: "but," "usually," and "for instance," among others.

While the writer handles language and syntax well, several bothersome problems keep this otherwise well-argued paper out of the 6 category. The problems vary from the lack of a pronoun referent ("When a sickness progresses or becomes diagnosed,...he may be referred to a specialist") to an error in parallel structure ("...how it begins, progresses and specified treatments"), to loose syntax and imprecise language ("Generalized teachers are required to begin molding students at a very early age so they can get ready for the future ahead of them in gaining more facts about the basic subjects and...")

Issue test5

Topic: Duty of Educators

Present your perspective on the issue below, using relevant reasons and/or examples to support your views.

"It is unfortunate that today's educators place so much emphasis on finding out what students want to include in the curriculum and then giving it to them.   It is the educators' duty to determine the curriculum and the students' duty to study what is presented to them."

SAMPLE-1 (score 6)

The statement above conceals infesting connotations far above curriculum development.   Issues of classroom control and development

of scholarly talents are at stake, not simply a debate over which books are acceptable or over revisionist histories.

The statement itself is a bit misleading in that in my experience, student control over curriculum hardly existed. Each year, there were certain course offerings made available, and students were to choose from those offerings, of course bearing in mind requirements for graduation set forth by the administration. On a classroom level, the immediate, initial material may have been somewhat directed by the students, but this was a part of the process allowed by the teacher/professor in order to gain the interest and attention of the students. However, too much of any one thing becomes problematic; letting students set the curriculum, as with letting students choose and design their own major in college, serves ultimately to dilute the quality of the educational experience unless a single advisor can devote significant amounts of time to the individual student. This amount of time, or even the expense to the student of this individual attention, seem to indicate that resources would be better allocated elsewhere.

Of course, any school in which the students decide "what goes" is bound to have problems controlling students. Once the educators, be they administrators or teachers, are under the control of students, even a democratic situation would be like holding royalty acountable to the mob. Presently, students hear for hours that they should not forget to use a condom in the heat of the moment, and educators think the message gets through, while half the kids can't even remember to bring a pencil to class.   Students go to school not to simply learn the Pythagorean theorem, but to learn direction and receive guidance. This cannot occur when students are in charge, and standards, already hard to find in America's contemporary public schools, will become unenforceable. If students dictate and administrators do, students will never learn academic responsibility, and if they can't be held accountable for homework, what other responsibilities will they avoid when they get older?

But in another sense, teachers and students do exist in a partnership of sorts. Teachers are there to satisfy the needs of the student, and the student, while perhaps not being the most experienced/ knowledgeable

person on what his/her needs actually are (versus wants), at least should be afforded some say. In addition, we must remember what the purpose of education is, and that there are different levels of education.

In high school, the focus is not so much on learning actual material. The focus is on developing study habits, and on social interaction. The best secondary schools promote an environment in which individual creativity and pacing can be developed, where students are taught to thinkon their own, and learn to debate and argue in a scholarly way, through writing and other formal methods of discourse. Group collaboration and interpersonal skills are developed and honed. The actual details of what is studied and tested is of less importance. Whether a student reads Maya Angelou, or Yeats, or Euripides essentially is beside the point as long as a student's mind is cultivated, not just their ability to record and recite. What is important is that secondary students develop and grow in the hands of the professionals.

The secondary educational experience is designed to prepare a student for college. It is in college where the individual learns to examine the world and how it works, and the individual's place in it.

As for duty, it is the educators' duty not simply to determine the curriculum, but to present it effectively. They cannot half-heartedly paint it on the blackboard, they must enliven it and actually teach. Hard work must be lauded, while freeloaders are punished. These are the duties of teachers, and the duty of the students is not just to learn or study, but to grow. An independent mind is what students need, and that mind has to be in a position to want and be able to question beyond the material presented, not simply to question its legitimacy. That distinction, though subtle, is the difference between letting the students follow a self-destructive course of premature self-determination on the one hand , and permitting on the other hand the fostering of great talents through a cooperative, mentoring relationship

COMMENTARY

This is an insightful, well-articulated discussion of curricular responsibility and the larger issue of academic responsibility. After a brief introduction examining assumptions implied by the topic, the writer skillfully develops the position that letting students dictate the curriculum could dilute the educational experience. Allowing students to determine the curriculum, the writer claims, will deny them the guidance and direction they need to learn academic responsibility.
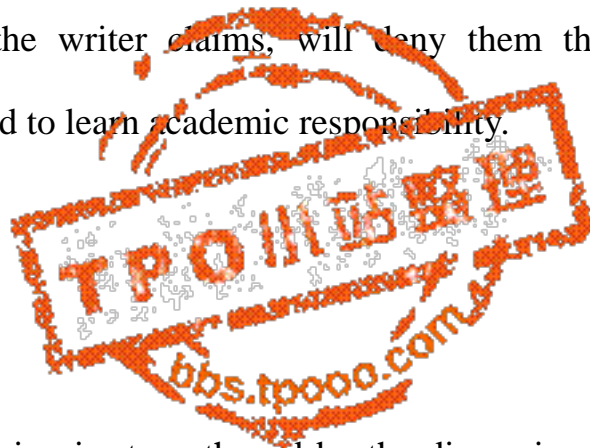
The line of reasoning is strengthened by the discussion of how teachers and students can work in partnership to satisfy the needs of students. The argument is further advanced with concrete examples from high school courses showing how teachers provide guidance for students through group collaboration, development of interpersonal skills, and preparation for college. The examples are varied (from condom use to reading Angelou, Yeats, or Euripides) and used effectively to further support the writer's position.

In the conclusion, the writer thoughtfully discusses how educators should not only determine the curriculum but present it in an enlivened and appropriate manner.   The final sentence, contrasting a "self-destructive course of premature self-determination" and "a cooperative, mentoring relationship," ties the essay together.

The essay is clearly organized, although the writer does not rely on conventional phrases (such as "first," "second," etc.) to signal the organizational structure.   Instead, the organization and focus progress through the line of reasoning that moves fluently and coherently from one paragraph to the next.

Language use is generally precise and effective (e.g., "holding royalty accountable to the mob"), and sentence structure is well controlled (e.g., "hard work must be lauded, while freeloaders are punished").   The few errors are minor, the kind that can easily be made -- and forgiven -- under testing conditions.

This outstanding response received a score of 6.

SAMPLE-2 (score 5)

FROM WHENCE SHOULD CURRICULUM COME?

"It is unfortunate that today's educators place so much emphasis on finding out what students want to include in the curriculum and then

giving it to them. It is the educator's duty to determine the curriculum and the students' duty to study what is presented to them."
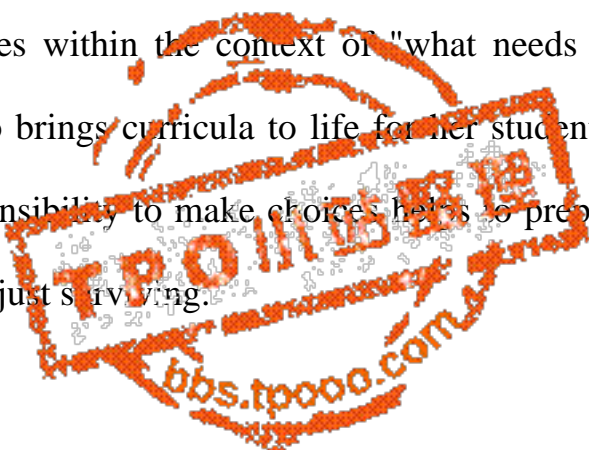
As an elementary educator, I believe this stance is extremist. Educators and the public must come to a middle road. The high road and the low road are intimated in this statement. I believe the high road on this topic (from whence should curriculum come) represents a nouveau approach. Ask the students what they want to learn and study for the year; then meander, research and branch out of their interests. The low road on this topic (directly endorsed by this statement) is old fashioned and outdated. The assumptions behind this view include a magical ability by teachers to infuse reams of information, data and knowledge into students' brains that then become internalized and applied by the students.

In a complex and frightening society, we must look to the middle road. We must infuse the best of the high and the low roads. Current research has had a lot to say on curriculum development. Overreaching arguments defend the quality of students' self-directed learning.

However, in order to prepare our students for this society, we must have developed the backbone and anchor for curriculum. Content and performance standards (i.e. curricula) need to be developed by the district's educators as a map for teachers. When educators provide students with choices WITHIN the map of curriculum, students relish in the freedom and take ownership for their learning.

Were we to provide students the ultimate authority in curriculum development, we would be doing an injustice not only to our students but to society as a whole. There are specific skills and abilities that need to be developed and taught -- regardless of students' (or for that matter, teachers') interest. In my profession as an elementary educator and as a parent, I value the abilities to read, write and be mathematically proficient. Those students not mastering those critical skills are at a disadvantage. We see those students become destructive or depressed. I have observed students struggling with the basics become outcasts in their own little worlds. Very young outcasts grow into adult outcasts.

I do NOT think it is unfortunate that today's educators emphasize students' interests.   It IS our duty, however, to provide the parameters for their education.   We can not simply state that educators determine curriculum and students follow.   This is just not reality in the classrooms. When standards and curricular maps have been developed, teachers of today's children have the responsibility (yes, the duty!) to bring life to those maps.   One crucial and successful way, is to provide students variety and choices within the context of "what needs to be covered." The educator who brings curricula to life for her students and gives her students the responsibility to make choices helps to prepare our children for thriving -- not just surviving.
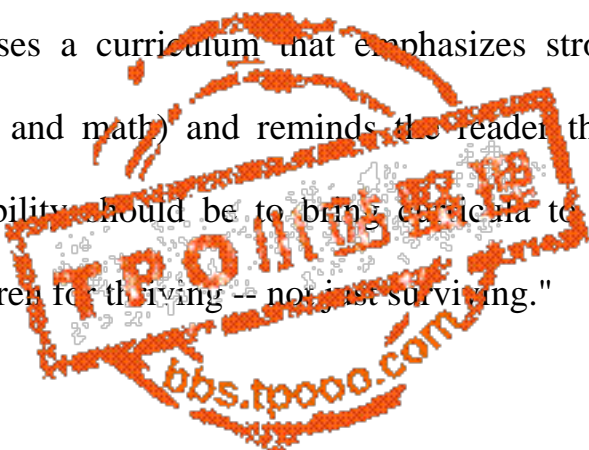
COMMENTARY

This response presents a well-developed analysis of the issue and displays strong control of the elements of writing.   The essay argues in favor of a

"middle road" position on the issue by analyzing the pros and cons of both teacher-determined and student-driven curricula.   The argument is clear and well focused, supported with first-hand experience and the results of educational research.

The writer endorses a curriculum that emphasizes strong basic skills (reading, writing, and math) and reminds the reader that the teachers' ultimate responsibility should be to bring curricula to life in order to "prepare our children for thriving -- not just surviving."

This essay displays a strong facility with written English language; the careful choice of words and carefully structured paragraphs help unify the structure of the argument.   Overall, this response displays a strong command of academic writing skills and thus received a score of 5.

\

ssue test6

Topic: Best Ideas

Present your perspective on the issue below, using relevant reasons and/or examples to support your views.

"The best ideas arise from a passionate interest in commonplace things."

SAMPLE-1 (score 6)

Even the most brilliant thinkers, from Socrates to Satre, live lives in time. A childhood, an adolescence, an adulthood; these are common to me and you as well as the greatest writers. Furthermore, many of the great thinkers we esteem in our Western culture lived somewhat uneventful lives. What distinguished their life from say a common laborer was their work. Therefore, what provided the grist for their work? One might say that they were brilliant and this alone was sufficient to distinguish their lives from the masses. Intellect alone can not devise situations or thoughts from no where; there must be a basis and that basis is most common, if not always, observation of the common of the quotidian. Critics of this idea may argue that these thinkers were products of fine educations and were well schooled in the classics. This, they may point to, is the real basis for their knowledge. I would argue that although it may be a benefit to study classics and be well schooled in diverse disciplines, these pursuits merely refine and hone an ability each and every person has, the ability to study human nature. Where best to study human nature than in the day to day routine each one of us can witness in him or herself or those around us.

I propose that the two best disciplines to understand this power of the commonplace and its ability to cause a groundswell of thought are philosophy and literature. Every school of philosophy, from the Greeks to our day, share a common mission or intent and that is to understand and explain human existence, with all of its concomitant features. Generally speaking, the Greek philosophers, epitomized in Aristotle, attempted to set down rules for human behavior founded on logic. These rules applied not only to the rare forms of human behavior but largely focused on the more mundane motions of daily life. Many of Aristotle's rules were based on his observations of others as well as himself. Contrast this venture with the existentialists of our century who attempted to look behind the real motivations of human behavior as well understand man's relation to the Universe. To do this, what did these philosophers do? They studied those around them; they submerged themselves in the commonplace, in cities with hordes of anonymous people. While the existentialists, as well those philosophers before, exploited their uncommon education and intellect, the basis for their movement was ordinary human behavior and existence.

Finally, literature is similar to philosophy in that it seeks to explain and

understand human behavior and therefore rooted in the commonplace. Nevertheless, its relative strength over philosophy is literature's ability to emotionally and spiritually move the reader through the use of contrived situations and fictional characters. It can do this when even the central theme of a piece maybe love between a man and a woman (e.g. commonplace). Literature also distinguishes itself from philosophy in that the breadth of the fiction may be huge. The plot and the detail can be quite ordinary or fanatastic. However, this does not mean that the central themes of all literature, whether ordinary or fantastic, deal with human beings and the problems they find in the world, something which we all share.

In conclusion, I hope it has been shown that a passionate desire to understand and explain human behavior, the significance of our existence and deal constructively with the challenges of life are the centerpieces of at least in two of the most influential areas in human thought. What is more commonplace than the existence of man.

COMMENTARY

This essay sustains a well-focused and insightful analysis of the issue. Beginning with the observation that the greatest thinkers "live lives in time," the writer reasons that the great thinkers develop their ideas through observation of common occurrences and everyday reality. One of the strengths of this essay is the way in which it thoughtfully considers the opposing claim: that great thinkers are primarily the product of fine education, and that, being "well schooled in the classics," they are far removed from everyday life. The writer notes that, while it "may be a benefit to study classics," it is nevertheless true that being "well schooled in diverse disciplines" will simply "refine and hone an ability to study human nature" in its everyday manifestations. This observation is indicative of the writer's sophisticated grasp of the complexities of the issue.

The writer goes on to demonstrate the intellectual "power of the commonplace" by skillfully developing two compelling examples from academic life: philosophy and literature. Aristotle is cited as a philosopher who studied the "more mundane motions of daily life." Similarly, the writer explains, twentieth-century existentialists, in attempting to understand man's relation to the universe, found inspiration in the commonplace.

Another strength in this essay is the way it introduces an idea and then builds on that idea as the argument unfolds. For instance, in a discussion of the existentialists in the second paragraph, the writer expands on an earlier point about "thinkers" in general: the existentialists may have "exploited their uncommon education and intellect," but the "basis for their movement was ordinary human behavior and existence." It is logical connections such as these that make for a coherent and well-focused discussion.

The writer uses language fluently and controls sophisticated syntax

throughout the essay: "I would argue that although it may be a benefit to study classics and be well schooled in diverse disciplines, these pursuits merely refine and hone an ability each and every person has, the ability to study human nature."

This is not a flawless paper: word choice, for example, is not always precise. But the essay's cogent analysis, effective organization, and sophisticated sentence structure merit a solid score of 6.

SAMPLE-2 (score 5)

I can agree with the statement above that, "The best ideas arise from a passionate interest in commonplace things. " The statement   is an

accurate description of how many people form great ideas from ordinary things in life. Sports are all great ideas that are made from commonplace things.   What makes sports some of the best ideas is not what they began as but what they evolved into.

All athletic competitions began from commonplace things being brought together for the purpose of entertainment, exercise, and social interaction.   Many of the sports people enjoy today are the results of someone's idea creating a new dimension of our lifestyle out of an ordinary object.   Baseball, basketball, and track especially show that the idea of creating something wonderful out of ordinary objects is true.

Who would have thought that a stick and a ball would spawn into a national pastime, a generational tie between father and son, , a national bond between all races, and a multibillion dollar industry.   Baseball began when someone decided to throw a ball at someone with a stick and that person with the stick would then try to hit the ball.   What a simple concept and what a wonderful consequence.

Today the simple game of baseball is played all over the world. It is a sport that crosses international divides of religion, race, and politics. This one simple game, a bat hitting a ball, can bring the whole world together. But baseball is just one sport that shows the ability to bridge cultural gaps.

When Mr. Nesmith nailed a peach basket to a post and threw a ball into it he had no idea that millions of people would be playing his game today. Mr. Nesmith invented the game of basketball, which most everyone has played at some point in his or her life. Throwing a ball into a basket. What could be more simple or commonplace than a ball and a peach basket.

Today, basketball is the new American pastime. It replaced baseball because it is cheaper than baseball and it can be played by only one

person.　This interest in balls and new uses for them,　as we can see in both baseball and basketball, brought about a huge social phenomena of exercise and new social interaction that would bring people together rather than divide them.

It doesn't take a ball to create a sport from a commonplace item.　Track and field has no balls used in it, unless you consider the shot-put a ball. The whole sport of track and field is made of simple ideas: running, jumping, and throwing. Simple but yet it is one of the most watched events worldwide as evidenced by the recent Olympic Games. For example, team relay races consist of four people running around an oval track passing a baton to each other.　A baton that is the only object you need to have a relay race, a baton is definitely a commonplace thing. Yet this event has such stars as Carl Lewis who is known world wide.

Sports and how they were created is the epitome of the idea that "the best ideas arise form a passionate interest in commonplace things."　What might have seemed boring at the time of hitting a ball, or throwing a ball

into a net, or passing a baton are all now events that millions take part in and even more watch. What makes these ideas great is that they all bring people from different backgrounds together, wither they intended to or not.

COMMENTARY

This essay presents a thoughtful, if not very well-developed, discussion of the issue. Drawing examples from the world of sports, the writer notes that most sports begin with a simple idea. Baseball, for example, "began when someone decided to throw a ball at someone with a stick and that person with the stick would then try to hit the ball." From this simple idea came a sport that is played and enjoyed all over the world. Instead of focusing solely on the universal appeal of sports, however, the essay introduces the idea that sports cross "international divides of religion, race, and politics." This is a perceptive idea, but it is not effectively

supported or sustained.

Throughout the essay, ideas are expressed clearly and word choice is accurate. Sentences are at times well formed and varied: "Today the simple game of baseball is played all over the world. It is a sport that crosses international divides of religion, race, and politics. This one simple game, a bat hitting a ball, can bring the whole world together." On the whole, however, this is a 5 essay. It lacks the syntactic sophistication and insightful analysis necessary for a score of 6.