

UNIVERSITY INTERSCHOLASTIC LEAGUE READY WRITING CONTEST

HIGH SCHOOL TOPICS

Region • 2019

Read both of the following statements carefully; then write an expository essay on a topic clearly related to one or the other of the two statements. **Provide your own title.** You are not expected to write on both topics.

Contestants who are hand-writing their compositions must use their own standard 8 1/2 x 11-inch ruled white notebook paper or typing paper or the paper provided by the host school. Contestants shall write or print the composition **in ink and on only one side of the paper.** If contestants choose to use their own laptop computers, they must bring portable printers and associated hardware, software and paper. The typed entry must be single-sided and double-spaced, using any standard 12-point font on 8 1/2 x 11-inch white paper. When printing the contest on an electronic printer, the print command must be started by the time contest time expires. Students who opt to compose their entries on computers accept the risk of computer malfunction. In case of computer malfunction, the contestant may use the remaining allotted time to complete the composition in handwriting or compose on another computer (if available).

Ready Writing prompts are provided as springboards for thought, not to advocate particular points of view. Contestants should not conclude that quotations or statements used in prompts reflect the opinion of the UIL.

Topic I

“The greatest tie of all is language.... Words are the only things that last forever. The most tremendous monuments or prodigies of engineering crumble under the hand of Time. The Pyramids moulder, the bridges rust, the canals fill up, grass covers the railway track; but words spoken two or three thousand years ago remain with us now, not as mere relics of the past, but with all their pristine vital force.”

--Winston Churchill (1874-1965), Former British Prime Minister, *News of the World* Interview, 1938.

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Topic II

“The problem nowadays is that children have become too much the center of attention. Their parents, their families, everybody around them feels a need to put them on a pedestal. So much effort is invested in boosting their self-esteem that they are made to feel special in and of themselves, without having done anything.”

--Rafael Nadal (b. 1986), Spanish Professional Tennis Player, *Rafa*, 2011.

Conference Number _____

Contestant Number _____

UIL Ready Writing Rubric

Evaluation criteria are listed in the order of importance. Circle score rating in each of the three major areas of *interest*, *organization*, and *correctness of style*, and check the column which best describes the quality in each of the sub-areas.

(60%) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18

INTEREST: Writing exhibits originality of thought, analytical acuteness and overall coherence of exposition.

| | POOR | FAIR | GOOD | EXCELLENT |
|------------------|-------|-------|-------|-----------|
| Perceptive ideas | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Originality | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Examples | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Title | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

(30%) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

ORGANIZATION: Each paragraph develops one idea and contributes to an understanding of main idea or thesis.

| | POOR | FAIR | GOOD | EXCELLENT |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-----------|
| Clear thesis | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Well-developed paragraphs, focused on one idea | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Transition | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Thesis support | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Composition clarity (as a whole) | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

(10%) 1 2 3

CORRECTNESS OF STYLE:

| | POOR | FAIR | GOOD | EXCELLENT |
|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|-----------|
| Punctuation | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Sentence structure | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Grammar | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Word usage | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Spelling | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

TOTAL SCORE: _____

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

UIL READY WRITING

SUGGESTIONS FOR GRADING PROCEDURES

(Contest Director Should Discuss with Contest Judges)

Divide the papers among the graders.

STEP #1 Instruct judges to scan the papers first and award a plus (+) or minus (-) at the bottom of the last attached UIL Judging Rubric. (Either one or three rubrics will be attached to each essay, depending on choice in step #7)

STEP #2: Gather the essays and separate papers into (+) and (-) stacks.

STEP #3: Redistribute the (+) papers to the judges.

STEP #4: Judges read and give preliminary ranking to the (+) essays. (Each on separate rubrics)

STEP #5: Judges then determine the final ranking of the top 6 papers. Judges may award a total of 30 points by circling the appropriate numbers in each of the three major areas of consideration: interest, organization and correctness of style.

STEP #6: In accordance to rankings, provide at least one rubric assessment for each essay (both the + and - papers) entered in the contest. Judges write directly on the judging rubric, remembering to offer **constructive criticism** aimed at helping students overcome area(s) of weakness or error. The comments need not be long, but should be specific rather than general because specific references are more beneficial.

STEP #7: There are three possible methods for providing responses:
1) One judge may give written response in the space provided on a rubric;
2) All three judges may collaboratively provide responses on one rubric; or
3) All three judges may write separate responses on separate rubrics.
NOTE: Judges should never make corrections, comments, etc. directly on the papers. Comments are to be written on the rubric only!

Checked portions of at least one rubric should be completed for each contestant. **Return all judging rubrics to students with their essays.**

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Q. What if the student doesn't strictly address the topic on the prompt?

A: That's OK. The prompt is intended as a starting place. If a student sees ramifications or applications, he or she may write a coherent, expository essay on that portion of the prompt so long as the judge can identify a common thread between the prompt and the response. But the essay shouldn't ramble.

2. Q: What if a paper is interesting but short?

A: An essay should be well developed, intelligent. If it's clever, original, steady and reliable, even better. The long ago requirement was 1,000 words, minimum. Use this as a guideline but do not count words. Instead, consider whether the essay develops a theme, provides interesting and relevant examples and treats the subject with creativity and flair.

(Continued on reserve)

3. Q: What if an entry is technically correct but boring?

A: Ready writing rewards interest and creativity (60%) over formulaic writing or grammatical correctness (10%). Do not reward pomposity or the desire to shoehorn a quote from Thoreau or Blake fit into any situation. As William Golding noted, "What a word is truth." Alas, how true. How true!

4. Q: What if a paper has multiple grammar or punctuation errors?

A: Well, this isn't a grammar contest, but each judge may award three points for correctness of style. If judges notice many errors, they ain't got to award them three points at all.

5. Q: What if a student uses first person pronouns?

A: I don't see any problem with this as long as the essay is expository in nature. The student may use first person pronouns as appropriate when using a personal experience to create interest and substantiate the expository discussion. At least, that's how I see it.