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Dear Academic Adviser, Registrar, and other personnel to whom it may concern:

My name is Nicole A. Harris and I teach AICE English General Paper (AICE EGP) for non-traditional Cambridge students. The purpose of this letter to aide in my students' appeal process should they receive a passing score to earn college credit. Currently, at most institutions, this course earns students an elective credit often towards humanities since it is considered an entry-level course for the traditional four-year Cambridge program. However, students who took this course with me were enrolled in a full-on college-level English class. AICE English General Paper (EGP) replaced English IV Honors at our school and increased the standards of the honors curriculum to a more rigorous level in preparation for the exam and college-level writing. Students who successfully completed my class were trained in the art of rhetoric and argumentation, often writing discursive and persuasive essays based on a wide variety of sources. The exam calls the student to choose an open-ended essay topic which could be a prompt such as: "No man is an island. Discuss" or "Should the key industries of a society (i.e. health, education, etc.) be controlled by the State?" and students have to rise to the occasion to pen a 6-7 paragraph essay about 600-700 words and argue their points based on knowledge gathered throughout the year through the required topical areas of: science/technology, history/ethics, sociocultural factors, politics/government, and media/entertainment in 1 hour and 15 minutes. There is also a logical reasoning portion of the exam in response to text. Throughout the year, students are practicing for this through selected readings of literature, informative articles, class discussions, peer interviews, and documentaries. Roughly students are writing anywhere from 10,000-15,000 words per our practice period. One benefit and challenge students receive by enrolling in this course is that they are loosened from some of the structure taught in grade school writing and given the freedom to learn to formulate their ideas in a way that fosters more sophisticated thought required at the postsecondary stage.

Students were constantly asked to synthesize from sources that were vastly different from one another, taught how to paraphrase with correct attribution while giving new insight and not simply regurgitate the text, and challenged to deeply analyze text beyond the surface. In addition to the essays students penned in preparation for the AICE EGP exam, students had major term papers called "The Education Paradigm Synthesis essay", "Literary Song Analysis", and a six chapter memoir of narrative writing covering their grade school years. Moreover, in response to Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, students collectively self-published a book of modern-day tales to satirically survey the issues of our day. Reflection papers were also assigned as students attended various events and heard from a diverse array of guest/career speakers. ***In this packet, I have included sample student papers and assignment rubrics to help the case that this credit be counted towards a college English credit (ENC1101 or 1102) and the Gordon Rule. Students with a Cambridge exam passing score of an A or B particularly could qualify for this.***

I do understand how important it is for some students to be exposed to ENC1101 upon entering college since quite a bit of the expectations do change. However, I firmly believe that many of my students have the foundation they need to allow this course to count towards one of their English credits. I am willing and available to discuss the readiness of individual students on a case-by-case basis who may wish to appeal that their credit be applied to an English rather than an elective.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Nicole A. Harris

GHS Teacher of the Year 2016-2017

English I Scholars & AICE English General Paper AS Level (formerly English IV Honors)

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ASSIGNMENT A - Sample Student Essays for Literary Song Analysis Paper:

SAMPLE 1 (A)

The song, “Tequila” by Dan + Shay is a nostalgic country song about past relationships and was written by Dan Smyers, Jordan Reynolds, and Nicolle Gaylon. The song is not only nostalgic for the artist but tells a very relatable and nostalgic story for the listener, as well, told in first person. The songs many detailed memories and tequila induced flashbacks are used to relay the message that the memories of someone may be easy to suppress and push away, but there will always be something out there, even something small, that brings those memories of that time to the surface.

First and foremost, the thing that sticks out the most and what really makes this song is the number of anecdotes strung throughout the lyrics. The main character in this song’s story remembers how his ex-girlfriend danced around “in a sorority t-shirt” (line 9) and when he “[swore] on a Bible... [he’d] never leave” (line 12) her. By using these small, descriptive stories, it helps the audience understand how something as small as a sip of tequila causes all these memories to rush in like a flood. The tone of the song is nostalgic and the main character telling these anecdotes helps to convey it. Not only does he talk about the past but also the present. He says, “I can kiss somebody brand new/And not even think about you” (lines 15-16). These lines along with many others shows the audience that he can go through life doing anything he wants and be completely fine, but “[her] memory, it only hits [him that] hard/When [he] taste[s] tequila” (lines 19-20).

Dan + Shay also use repetition and rhyming to really get the big message of the song across: “I ain’t even drunk, I ain’t even drunk and I’m thinkin’/How I need your love, how I need your love, yeah, it sinks in/When I taste tequila” (lines 28-31). These lines show that even though the character isn’t heavily intoxicating himself with tequila, just the taste of it brings back all his memories with his ex-girlfriend. While this song does not have much allusion, there is one allusive line that is repeated throughout. Dan + Shay says multiple times, “Cuttin’ up the floor in a sorority t-shirt/The same one you wore when we were/Sky high in Colorado” (lines 9-11). When a lot people think about Colorado, their first thought is that they have recreational marijuana. This helps create the story and is also an anecdote that relates back to the theme of the song.

When first listening to this song, the first thing one might notice is the amount of slang used through out it. The diction is very southern, using shortened words like “cuttin’” instead of cutting and “ya” instead of you.

This gives the song a kind of cozy, comfortable feeling and the writer used this kind of diction to relate to the cozy, comfortable feeling the main character once felt with the significant other he is talking about. Speaking informally, in a way, helps for people to relate rather than speaking very proper and it not giving that same welcoming feeling like that person from the past did. The repetition of the word 'baby' also helps the mood of the song. When in relationships, people often call their significant others' things like 'baby' or 'babe', so using this word constantly in a song about a past person they were in a relationship gives the listener nostalgia, as well.

At the end of the song, after the bridge, the chorus is repeated, but some words are taken out. The melody is much slower and not as upbeat in the first half of the chorus, but when the second half is sung, the singer belts it out. This catharsis, or emotional release, is intended to give the listener a moment of relief as they realize they aren't the only ones who have experienced heart break. This catharsis plays a major role in the really getting the reader to feel what the writer intended which is that feeling of being able to relate to the experiences of the main character in this song's story. Lines 38-40 repeat "when I taste tequila" which shows the true emotions behind the song and the tone very heavily.

After the pain of a heartbreak, most people can move on from it, even though it may still hurt sometimes. In 'Tequila' by Dan + Shay, a story is told of how a man can live his life doing the things he loves, but in the end, there is always going to be that one thing out there that brings up those old memories. The tone of this song is nostalgic and makes the listener think about someone that they may have these same experiences with. With the many anecdotes, colloquial and southern diction, and catharsis at the end, the artist brings a very emotional song to the table that almost anyone can relate to.

ASSIGNMENT B - Sample Student Essays for Education Paradigms Synthesis Paper:

ASSIGNMENT RUBRIC/INSTRUCTIONS:

Education Paradigms Writing Assignment +300 points (2 Pages, 12 font, double-spaced) DATE DUE:

“The institution didn’t create the society, the society created the institution.” –Ms. Harris

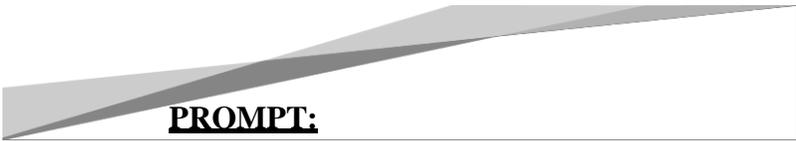
In this writing, you will be asked to expand this idea from our survey of education these past few weeks. Your task is to **synthesize ideas** from the following sources:

- 1) Sir Ken Robinson’s video, “Changing Education Paradigms” (notes and question sheet)
- 2) The article from TED, “What the Best Education Systems Are Doing Right”
- 3) Howard Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligence (**pay attention to the different sources within the packet**)
- 4) Marita’s Bargain (pgs. 3-14)
- 5) The Secret to Raising Smart Kids (pgs. 21-26) in your textbook
- 6) Your interview findings/our class discussions
- 7) Any of the case study videos Finland or Korea (or from your country of origin)
- 8) Tampa Bay Times article on grit
- 9) American Values Practice

“WHAT IS A SYNTHESIS?”

A synthesis is a written discussion that draws on one or more sources. It follows that your ability to write syntheses depends on your ability to infer relationships among sources - essays, articles, fiction, and also nonwritten sources, such as lectures, interviews, observations. This process is nothing new for you, since you infer relationships all the time - say, between something you've read in the newspaper and something you've seen for yourself, or between the teaching styles of your favorite and least favorite instructors. In fact, if you've written research papers, you've already written syntheses. In an academic synthesis, you make explicit the relationships that you have inferred among separate sources.”

<https://msu.edu/~jdowell/135/Synthesis.html>



PROMPT:

In your essay, explain how values in our society contribute to current systems of education, the impact and practical implications of these values, and how we can use these same values and/or other societal values to adopt best practices to reform parts of the education system.

RUBRIC

Content & Organization Expectations for Synthesis	10 Points	5 Points	1 Point
<p>SOURCES: Utilization of all 9 sources including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Sir Ken Robinson’s video 2) One of the education videos from Korea or Finland 3) Your interview findings 4) Howard Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligence 5) Marita’s Bargain (3-14) 6) Tampa Bay Times Article “Student Grit Matters As Much As Test Scores Do” 7) TED Article “What Best Edu. Systems Are Doing Right” 8) The Secret to Raising Smart Kids (21-26) 9) *American Values chart (supplementary source) <p style="text-align: center;">(10x10)</p>	<p>Clearly synthesizes the content from the 9 sources dealing with a new, single issue of how our American values have impacted how we establish our schools and practices therein, connecting the ideas to show the relationship between all sources. Strongly backs up ideas with evidence from all sources.</p>	<p>Synthesizes some of the content from several sources dealing with a single issue, demonstrates limited connection between the ideas. Student is missing information from some of the sources and does not fully connect the idea of how American values shape the education system. Limited evidence used from sources, not strong enough to back up ideas presented.</p>	<p>Demonstrates <u>minimal</u> synthesis of information. Student’s paper is missing vital information from the sources and engages in summary more than synthesizing. There are little to no new ideas or conclusion of how a culture’s values impacts the function of their education system. Ideas are stated and not supported with adequate evidence from the text.</p>
<p>CONVENTIONS, USAGE & GRAMMAR: Proofreading and revising to ensure a polished product</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(10x3)</p>	<p>Provides a variety of sentence types and uses precise, descriptive language. Contains few errors in the conventions of the English language. Correct MLA citing of sources.</p>	<p>Contains a fair amount of errors in the conventions of the English language. Errors may impede understanding. Inconsistent citing of MLA sources.</p>	<p>Contains serious errors in the conventions of the English language. Errors impede understanding. Barely any citing of MLA sources.</p>
<p>ORGANIZATION: Essay is structured in a way that makes sense.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(10x10)</p>	<p>Essay demonstrates that student has given careful thought to how they should organize their ideas; should result in a smooth, coherent flow of ideas.</p>	<p>Essay is lacking basic organization. It is not clear what ideas follow and several ideas are out of place but the overall idea is still present.</p>	<p>Essay is not organized, ideas are not clear and scattered.</p>
<p>SUGGESTIONS FOR REFORMS: Reforms are suggested that are concrete and based on values presented throughout the essay</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(10x5)</p>	<p>Student offers creative, strong, practical solutions based on all values in the thesis.</p>	<p>Student offers creative, strong, practical solutions based on 1-2 values in the thesis.</p>	<p>Student offers reforms that aren’t specific or practical, does not base the reforms on values presented in paper.</p>
<p>TURNED IN SOURCES: 5 points each</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(20)</p>	<p>Students shall turn in the following to accompany their essay: 1) Sir Ken questions, 2) Interview Questions, 3) Notes for BOTH book articles and at least one country case study, 4) American Values Chart</p> <p><i>*ADDING SOURCES NOT LISTED WILL RESULT IN POINTS DEDUCTED</i></p> <p>ALL SOURCES MUST BE STAPLED (or paper clipped) & ORGANIZED BEFORE YOU GET TO CLASS— THERE WILL BE NO STAPLERS or PAPER CLIPS AVAILABLE THAT DAY</p>		

*If you are absent, even if it is excused, I MUST have formal contact with a parent or guardian listed on your infinite campus in order for you to avoid the late penalty.

Total Points: ____/300= ____%

SAMPLE 1 (B - excerpt)

All cultures have core beliefs that form their various institutions. The beliefs of the people in their society reflect how healthcare will be given or how the economy will run. In American society, this is no different. Institutions such as the education system have societal values embedded to determine how the education system should be. These values may or may not favor the educational system, because while some of the values can be useful in the present, but they can be harmful in the future. The three societal values that shape the educational system in the U.S.A. are: individualism, technology and equality.

The United States believes strongly in the value of individualism. This is the belief that every person is unique and should account for themselves. Online classes are a direct reflection of this American standard. Students enrolled in online classes can work at their own pace and have a one-on-one experience with the teachers. However, online classes do not allow for individual students to work together in groups. American students in general are not accustomed to working collaboratively to achieve a goal or use their individual talents effectively. Collaboration benefits students by helping them learn from their peers. In the video, "Changing Education Paradigms", Sir Ken Robinson remarks that "collaboration is the stuff of growth" (Sir Ken Robinson). To create a society where people can accept one another, a habit of hearing ideas from their peers is vital. In 1983, Howard Gardner describes a theory of Multiple Intelligence. In it, he speaks about different kinds of intelligences. One of which is interpersonal intelligence, which is founded on the type of learning that builds upon relationships with others. This kind of intelligence allows for emotional intelligence when responding to others and should be implemented more in schools (Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences).

SAMPLE 2 (B - excerpt)

In every country, there is always competition in the education system. The U.S. tracks students by their ability to work fast or slow. Every kid is in competition with other students by taking certain classes (AP, honors, or regular) depending on if they score high enough on a standardized test or teacher recommendation. In South Korea, competition is also something their society values. Students are studying thirteen hours a day. They get home around eleven o'clock to wake up at six in the morning to start studying all over again. The suicide rate is the highest in the developed world due to the stress and pressure put on the kids (BBC News). The students are held to such high expectations. Like the U.S. they are tested heavily. Even though the suicide rate is not as high because of testing, many students here aren't able to graduate or take advantage of opportunities like Dual Enrollment. Due to the amount of competition in the education system, students who aren't able to take advantage of the opportunities or those who get left behind in a subject, often think they aren't smart enough. In the article, "The Secret to Raising Smart Kids", the author says "students with a growth mindset felt that learning was a more important goal than getting good grades" (Dweck 21). The idea of a growth mindset is the ability to see failure as just one step towards success instead of the end. Sir Ken Robinson states "that many brilliant people think they are not" because they are categorized into academic and non-academic. Competition is unfair to certain students who aren't able to have a chance to compete in the current system. Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences rests on the fact "that people who have a unique blend of capabilities and skills" (Northern Illinois University, Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center). The system only focuses on one type of intelligence, making it impossible for all students to compete successfully.

SAMPLE 3 (B - excerpt)

America's value of politics contributes to the education system. This has to do with general parties and representatives that have a say in the education system. Politics is one value that has governed schools and how they operate. Policies enacted in schools are given by the top down. Everything from graduation requirements, textbook adoptions, and curriculum is decided by senators, governors, and elected school board members. This is a stark contrast from what is seen in Finland's education system. In a BBC News special, one of the school officials remarked that no one from the outside tells them what to do. He went on to say that the school belongs to them and not the politicians. This is based on the Finnish value of trust (BBC News). Leaving the policies up to the public officials may not always be best. Some officials make policy decisions based off their political affiliations and beliefs and not best interest of the students or the school. For example, making tests a primary measure of a students' success came from decisions made by politicians.

On the other hand, politics as a value has good benefits to the educational system as well. In the curriculum, students are required to take political classes such as Civics, Government, U.S. History, and Economics. As a result, "people will always know the incidents occurring throughout the world" (America Values Chart). This will produce well-informed citizens.

SAMPLE 4 (B - excerpt)

Achievement and success, although it is a great thing to strive for, can lead to serious mental health issues. It has been shown that Americans value achievement and success, this is seen with academic scholarships and special awards given to students who excel academically, but what is more important, a student's academics or their mental health? A study in 1871 came to the conclusion that "education lays the foundation of a large portion of the causes of mental health" (Gladwell 5) which comes to point a flaw in the education system. South Korea can be seen as an example of what is to come if the education system continues to go down this path. In South Korea "a child's life revolves around education" (BBC News) due to the fact that high academic scores are expected by parents and the job market. Their investment in education has led to "[an achievement of] a - remarkable feat; the country is 100 literate. But the success comes with a price" (Choi). Inevitably, South Korea also has the "highest suicide rate in a developed country" (BBC News) due to the pressure put on adolescents from a young age. Along with that some students can come to the conclusion that they are not brilliant "because they have been viewed as non-academic in their minds" (Robinson) which could possibly lead to low self-esteem and feelings of worthlessness. Therefore, America needs to take note before things get worse.