

# GROUP QUALIFY ESSAY PROMPT CHOICES

**STEP ONE:** Decode each of the following prompts. As an individual, how would you answer the question? What evidence would you use to support your claim? For each prompt—on your own sheet of paper, you should prepare a pepper & paraphrase, thesis statement that answers the question, and a ROSE BOX with at least 3 pieces of evidence to support your claim.

**PROMPT 1:** American essayist and social critic H. L. Mencken (1880-1956) wrote, "The average man does not want to be free. He simply wants to be safe." In a well-written essay, examine the extent to which Mencken's observation applies to contemporary society, supporting your position with appropriate evidence.

**PROMPT 2:** William Lyon Phelps, American educator, journalist, and profession (1865-1943) said, "If you develop the absolutely sense of certainty that powerful beliefs provide, then you can get yourself to accomplish virtually anything, including those things that other people are certain are impossible." Write an essay in which you support, challenge, or refute Phelps's assertions about certainty. Support your argument with appropriate evidence.

**PROMPT 3:** Carefully read the following passage by Susan Sontag. Then write an essay in which you support, challenge, or qualify Sontag's claim that photography limits our understanding of the world. Use appropriate evidence to develop your argument

Photography implies that we know about the world if we accept it as the camera records it. But this is the opposite of understanding, which starts from *not* accepting the world as it looks. All possibility of understanding is rooted in the ability to say no. Strictly speaking, one never understands anything from a photograph. Of course, photographs fill in blanks in our mental pictures of the present and the past: for example, Jacob Riis's images of New York squalor in the 1880's are sharply instructive to those unaware that urban poverty in late-nineteenth-century America was really that Dickensian. Nevertheless, the camera's rendering of reality must always hide more than it discloses. As Brecht points out, a photograph of the Krupp works\* reveals virtually nothing about that organization. In contrast to the amorous relation, which is based on how something looks, understanding is based on how it functions. And functioning takes place in time and must be explained in time. Only that which narrates can make us understand.

The limit of photographic knowledge of the world is that, while it can goad conscience, it can, finally, never be ethical or political knowledge. The knowledge gained through still photographs will always be some kind of sentimentalism, whether cynical or humanist. It will be a knowledge at bargain prices—a semblance of knowledge, a semblance of wisdom. . . . The very muteness of what is, hypothetically, comprehensible in photographs is what constitutes their attraction and provocativeness. The omnipresence of photographs has an incalculable effect on our ethical sensibility. By furnishing this already crowded world with a duplicate one of images, photography makes us feel that the world is more available than it really is. Needing to have reality confirmed and experience enhanced by photographs is an aesthetic consumerism to which everyone is now addicted. Industrial societies turn their citizens into image-junkies; it is the most irresistible form of mental pollution.

—On Photography, 1977

\* Krupp: a German weapons manufacturing firm that was instrumental in the Nazi rearmament effort of the 1930's.

**PROMPT 4:** Known as the father of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud said, "Most people do not really want freedom, because freedom involves responsibility, and most people are frightened of responsibility." Write an essay in which you support, challenge, or refute Freud's assertions about freedom and responsibility. Support your argument with appropriate evidence.

**STEP TWO:** In your groups, go over your thesis statements and rose box evidence for each prompt. Someone read aloud prompt 1, take turns sharing thesis and specific evidence. Each person shares his or her thesis. Each person shares his or her evidence. Do the same for prompt 2, 3, and 4.

**STEP THREE:** Choose GROUP essay prompt. Decide which prompt your group can best answer based on opinions and evidence from the entire group. **Remember**, while you may have differing individual opinions about the topic, your ultimate goal is an essay that **QUALIFIES** the prompt.

**STEP FOUR:** Write a group introductory paragraph. Your paragraph should include the following:

- Descriptive hook (no more than 2-3 sentences) that is engaging and relevant to the topic.
- Transition between hook and pepper & paraphrase
- Pepper & paraphrase that fully and accurately defines the author's message
- Thesis that delineates the extent to which the group agrees/disagrees or the extent to which the message applies in today's society.

**\*\* This is a group effort. Every person needs his/her own copy of this paragraph. No one person should write the entire thing.**

**STEP FIVE:** Swap introductory paragraphs with another group. One person from the group should read the swapped paragraph aloud. As a team, give the writers feedback regarding the bullets in step four. Write your comments on the essay, so they have a record of improvements that can be made. **Return the paragraph to its rightful owner and begin revisions.**

**STEP SIX:** Each person should write one body paragraph that would support the group thesis. Decide **HOW** you are going to attack this prompt? Make sure your evidence is varied, so figure out **WHO** is doing what? Each body paragraph should include the following:

- Topic sentence that leads into specific evidence. (We will coordinate transitions on editing day)
- Brief explanation of **SPECIFIC** evidence
- Thorough link that **PROVES** the qualified argument, including connections to referenced author
- Mature & sophisticated grammar and mechanics
- Remember, you are **PROVING** your point and **NOT** simply giving an example of a quote.

GROUP MEMBER	BODY PARAGRAPH EVIDENCE	ROSE BOX CATEGORY

**STEP SEVEN:** Putting it all together! Work together to put the parts of your essay into one cohesive essay. You should focus on transitions that will make each body paragraph flow into the next.