

Middle School (6-8) Informative Writing Prompts

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IntelliMetric® Prompts

A Career For Me

Everyone has an idea of what they would like to do when they "grow up." Think about the career you would like to have when you finish school and why you would like to have this career.

Write a detailed essay explaining what career you would like to have when you "grow up" and why you have chosen this career. Use specific details to explain and support your reasons. Use adjectives and descriptive words to make your paper interesting to read.

A Good Friend

In the story "Amigo Brothers" by Piri Thomas, Antonio and Felix face many conflicts in their friendship. They realize that they must resolve them peacefully and put more effort into being good friends.

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you describe the qualities that define a good friend. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your response.

A Mentor in Your Life

We often learn valuable lessons from wise and trusted individuals in our lives. These individuals are considered to be mentors, because they support or influence us in a special way.

Think of someone you have had, or whom you may like to have, as a mentor in your life. Explain the qualities this person has, or lessons he/she could share, that would influence your life in a positive way.

A New Planet

Our solar system is home to a diverse collection of planets, including Jupiter the gas giant, dusty red Mars, and our life-abundant planet Earth. Many factors, such as atmosphere, gravity, and the surrounding moons, make every planet in our galaxy unique in its own way. If you had an opportunity to discover a planet of your own, what are some of the characteristics you would like to find on this new planet?

In a detailed essay, describe the combination of characteristics of those commonly found in our solar system that would make your planet unique.

A Prominent African American

Martin Luther King is prominently viewed as one of the foremost American leaders and one of the most well-known African Americans. While King is popularly renowned, there are many other African Americans who have made major contributions in the worlds of science, politics, and the arts.

In a detailed essay, describe an African American that you have researched who has helped America move forward in art, science, or politics.

A Role Model

A role model is a person you look up to. Think about someone you look up to. Why do you consider this person a role model? Write a well-developed essay on a person you consider a role model and why you consider him or her a role model. Include facts and details to support your explanation.

A Story of Inspiration

Inspiration can come from many places, particularly from those people who have faced daunting challenges or unusual hardships. Sometimes we look to others for encouragement and to understand how strength and perseverance can pay off in the end.

In a multi-paragraph essay, share a story of someone who inspires you. Be sure to describe what this person has done in his or her life to show strength and to encourage you.

Acts of Courage

Most of us have had to be courageous at some point in our lives to accomplish a goal or overcome an obstacle. Write a multi-paragraph essay about a time that you showed courage. Use details and examples to explain what problem you had to overcome or what obstacle you faced and how you showed courage in dealing with the situation.

An Activity You Do Well - HB Unit 1 Level C

Write a description of an activity you know how to do well. The activity might be writing music, playing a sport, or anything that uses a special talent you have. Describe the activity so that your classmates will be able to picture how you do the activity.

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An Admirable Woman in History

Throughout our history, there have been many admirable women who have had an important impact on our lives. Whether they were great leaders, writers, or individuals who broke new ground and gender barriers, the roles of many women throughout history are to be admired. What woman in history do you admire most? What did she contribute to the world or accomplish in her life that earned your admiration?

In a detailed essay, write about a famous woman in history that you admire. Include facts and details about her life to support your choice.

Analysis of a Newspaper Article

Newspaper articles are written differently from an informative essay. Choose a news or feature article from a current newspaper, and discuss the structure of it compared to the structure of an informative essay. How is your article organized? How does the writer begin and conclude the article? What type of language and writing style are used?

In a detailed essay, discuss and analyze the differences in structure of two types of informational text: a newspaper article and an informative essay. Include examples and details to support your description.

An Artist You Admire

Artists often help to criticize, analyze, and inspire our society and our lives. They help us better understand the realities of the world. Select an artist (musician, painter, dancer, etc.) that you admire and think about the messages communicated through her/his work. What are his/her best accomplishments? How does he/she inspire you to be creative?

Write a multi-paragraph essay discussing an artist and the reasons you admire his/her work. Include facts and details to support your discussion.

An Individual Who Has Impacted History

The right individual arriving at the right time in history can bring about significant changes. Investigate an individual at a major turning point in history, whether good or bad, and describe how his or her actions impacted history. Why do you think this person made such an impression on the world? What makes their actions so unique?

In a well-developed essay, discuss an individual and his or her impact on history. Include facts, details, and examples to support your discussion.

Anger Management

After watching a video on anger management, think of a time when you were very angry. What event or situation made you angry? Is there anything you would have changed about the way you handled your anger?

In a well-developed essay, describe an event that made you angry and use your five senses to explain how you were feeling at the time. As you are writing, think about the video's suggestions for managing your anger and apply them to the event you describe. Be sure to include facts, details, and examples for support.

Animal Olympics

With the Olympics only a few months away, athletes should consider themselves lucky that animals can't enter the games. Picture a gazelle doing the high jump, a cheetah in the 50-yard dash, or a flying squirrel leaping off the high dive. What would happen if animals held their own Olympics? What events would they have? Which animals would be on the medals platform?

In a well-developed essay, describe the Animal Olympics. Include details on events and participants to support your description.

Autobiography

An Autobiography is a piece of writing about the author's life written by the author. Write an essay about yourself, your autobiography. Include key events or moments in your life, friendships, interests, hobbies, or goals and dreams that define you as a person. What makes you tick?

Best Friends are Special People

Best friends are special people in our lives. Think about your best friend, the things that you enjoy doing together, and reasons that you like him or her.

In a well-developed essay, tell the reader about your best friend. Consider including the reasons you remain good friends and things you enjoy doing together.

Build a Teacher

If you were given the opportunity to “build” the ideal teacher, what features would you include? What personality features make a teacher more effective? What characteristics of teachers you have had would you incorporate into your teacher?

In a multi-paragraph essay, describe the features and characteristics you would build into the ideal teacher. Include details that will enable the reader to understand the important qualities of the teacher.

Build Your Own Robot

In today's world, science fiction has become reality as robots can now do many tasks that were formerly performed only by humans. Robots do important jobs in businesses, the armed services, and hospitals throughout the world. If you had an opportunity to build a robot to help make the world a better place, what would its job be and how would you best describe it?

In a well-developed essay, describe the robot you would design and the jobs it would perform.

Casting Call for "This is Your Life"

A major Hollywood film production company has decided to make a movie out of your life and they have put you in charge of casting. Who would you pick to play your family and friends, and most importantly, you? Why would you choose these celebrities?

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you describe which actors/actresses will play you and your closest family and friends in your motion picture and why you chose these particular celebrities.

Causes of Good Grades

We all know that it is important to do well in school and get good grades. However, we don't just wake up one morning with straight A's. What are some causes of high academic performance?

Write a detailed essay discussing the causes of a stellar academic record. Include examples and experiences to support your discussion.

Characteristics of a President

What are the most important characteristics for a president to have? The U.S. Constitution states that the President of the United States must be at least 35 years old and have been born in the United States.

But there are obviously other requirements that a president must meet. In a detailed essay, describe some of the qualities that are needed in a president of the United States that can make him or her successful.

Chronology of Boston Tea Party Events

Research the details of the Boston Tea Party and write a chronology of this event by answering these three questions: What were the causes of the Boston Tea Party? Exactly what happened at the Boston Tea Party? What were the effects of the Boston Tea Party?

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Clocks

Throughout the ages, humans have developed different ways to tell time. We have progressed from using hourglasses to digital time pieces as our needs have changed. In a well-developed essay, compare and contrast two or more ways to tell time and their uses in the past and present.

Conflict in Society

Think about a person who faced a conflict between what he or she thought was right and what others believed was right. Who was this person, and what conflict did he or she face?

Write a multi-paragraph essay describing the conflict the individual encountered, how it was resolved, and its aftereffects. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your analysis.

Conservation of Water

Of the water on Earth's surface, only about 3% is fresh water. We use it for drinking and personal hygiene, for watering crops, and for producing energy. All living things depend on water for survival. In what ways is water important to you? How does this impact how you use and conserve water?

In a well-developed essay, discuss your use and conservation of water due to its importance to you. Include facts and examples to support your discussion.

Critique a Field Trip

Teachers spend a lot of time researching and planning field trips, which are learning experiences outside of the classroom. How would you evaluate a field trip you have taken recently? Where did you go? What did you learn? Would you recommend the trip to a friend?

In a well-developed essay, critique a field trip. Include facts and details to support your critique.

Daily Use of Transfer of Energy

Energy is defined as the capacity to do work. In our daily lives, we experience the transfer of energy from one form to another. For example, electrical energy is transformed into mechanical energy in an electric pencil sharpener or electric fan. How do you benefit from the transfer of energy during your day?

In a well-developed essay, describe how you benefit from the transfer of energy in your daily life. Include facts and details to support your description.

Describing a Memorable Place

What place have you visited that you will always remember? It might be close by, or it might be in another part of the world. What was the place like, and why was it special to you?

Choose a place you have visited that was special to you. Write a letter to a friend describing the place and what was special about it. Remember to provide enough details about this place so the reader can picture the place in his or her mind.

Describing Someone Close to You - HB Unit 1 Level A

Write a description for your class to read. Tell about a friend or someone in your family.

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Designing Your Dream City

Imagine you are an architect and have been hired to design a brand new city. Where would you build your new city? How would you design it? What would it look like? What types of people would like to live or work there? What types of buildings, streets, and transportation would be included in your city?

In a multi-paragraph essay, describe in detail this ideal city you would like to build.

Disaster Plan

Imagine that a major hurricane, tornado, or other natural disaster is about to hit your town. What are some things you and your family could do to remain safe?

In a detailed essay, develop a natural disaster plan in which you discuss what you would do to remain safe in the onset of a natural disaster. Provide examples from experiences, observations, or from natural disasters you have learned about.

Enjoying Activities, Classes, and Clubs

Most schools offer a variety of activities, classes, and clubs. Identify one of these that students enjoy and explain why they enjoy it. Include specific details and examples in your response.

Extracurricular Activities in High School

Extracurricular involvement is a key component of the college admissions process. As you prepare to enter high school, it is wise to begin thinking seriously about the sports and/or extracurricular activities in which you would like to participate.

In a detailed essay, discuss one or more sports and/or activities you would like to get involved with in high school. Include how your involvement can benefit you in the future.

Family Traditions

Many families practice important traditions that are passed down from one generation to the next. Other families start new traditions. Think about your family's traditions. What tradition does your family follow that you would like to see passed to the next generation? How is it important to you and your family?

Write an essay in which you describe this tradition to the reader. Be sure to include specific details to illuminate this tradition for the reader.

Favorite Hobby

Most of us have hobbies or activities that we enjoy. For example, some people play sports; some read books or comics; and others collect things such as coins, stamps, or cards. What is your favorite hobby? What do you enjoy about it?

Write an essay describing your favorite hobby or activity and discuss what makes it enjoyable to you.

Favorite Person

We all have a favorite person, someone whom we like or respect more than anyone else. Think about the person in your life you consider your favorite. What is this person like? What does this person do to make him or her your favorite?

Write an essay about this person explaining what he or she is like and the things that he or she does that make him or her so special to you.

Geography Affects Way of Life

The geographical location of a country and its environment play a major role in the lifestyles of the people in that country. Factors such as diet and culture are greatly affected by a country's location on the map. For example, Japan has a large fishing and seafood industry due to the fact that it is surrounded by the Pacific Ocean. It also has large volcanic areas that make only certain areas of the country habitable.

In a detailed essay, describe the influence of a country's environment and geographical location on the people and their way of life. Include facts and examples in your description.

High School Entrance Essay

Imagine that the high school(s) in your district require you to submit an essay about yourself for consideration of admission.

Write a multi-paragraph essay to your high school selection committee in which you introduce yourself by discussing your educational background and goals, highlighting your academic and extracurricular accomplishments, and discussing the reasons you feel this high school is right for you.

Historical Figure for a Day

We study and remember historical figures for their efforts to keep peace, end conflict, or impact society in some way. If you could be a historical figure for a day, who would you choose to be? What events in his or her life would you like to experience?

In a well-developed essay, describe a day you spend as a historical figure during his or her lifetime. Use facts and details from the life of the person you choose to support your description.

How has Technology Changed Daily Life?

Think about how daily life, from reading to playing games to communicating with others, has changed over the past hundred years because of technology. Using specific details and examples, explain how these advancements in technology have changed daily life.

How is Math Used in Science?

Describe how mathematics is used to ask and answer questions about the natural world. What mathematical functions or concepts have you used in science class?

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How to Play Your Favorite Game

Most people like to play games. Think about your favorite game. Write directions telling how to play your favorite game for a person who has never played it before.

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If I Were President

Imagine that you were elected President and could change one important thing about your country. What would it be?

Write a multi-paragraph speech to your classmates in which you share your decision, as well as the reasons behind your change and the actions you would take to implement it. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your response.

Important Inventions

Discoveries and inventions have tremendous impact on our lives. Think about and choose one that has affected society. Write an essay to inform your reader about this discovery or invention. Explain its impact or influence on humankind.

Important Possession

Many of us have one possession that we consider particularly important. Think about one special object that you consider very important to you. Why is this object important to you?

Write an essay explaining this special possession and why this object has such special meaning.

Improvements to School Rules

In order for groups of people to work together effectively, rules must be in place. Think about the rules that exist in your school. Write an essay identifying school rules that need to be improved and provide suggestions for improvements to these school rules.

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Is a Driver's License Important to You?

From a very young age, many children enjoy the prospect of getting to drive a car. Getting a driver's license is the first step to getting behind the wheel, so it's very important to a lot of young people. Others are content to take the bus, walk, or carpool, arguing that driving can be expensive and dangerous.

Think about the positives and negatives associated with learning to drive. Then, write an essay describing whether or not getting your driver's license is important to you. Be sure to use details for support.

Media Influence

The media significantly influences our lives these days. We are surrounded by media sources such as television, radio, magazines, newspapers, and the Internet. Which of these media sources do you think most affects our daily lives? How does it affect us?

Write an essay about the media source of your choice and explain how it affects your life and the lives of those around you.

Middle School Changes

When students first enter middle school, they are often surprised by how different it is. Schedules, teachers, and friends change. Soon students realize that these differences have caused them to change too in many ways.

In a detailed essay, discuss how you have changed since you entered middle school. Include examples and details to support your discussion.

Music in My Life

Music is often a part of our everyday lives. Many people listen to their iPods or MP3 players while exercising, working, relaxing, or even while exploring nature. Many use the Internet to explore music, download music, and watch music videos. Some even make their own music, either as part of a group or independently. However people choose to include music in their lives, it often affects their mood, attitude, or behavior.

In a multi-paragraph essay, explain how music is a part of your life. Be sure to include specific details about the music and examples of how it might influence your ideas, emotions, relationships, and behavior.

My Own "Private Island"

The true story, "Barrio Boy" by Ernesto Galarza, describes a young boy who journeyed from a mountain village in Mexico to a barrio in Sacramento, California during the Mexican Revolution. The barrio boy consistently felt like an outsider in his new world and would imagine that he was back in Mexico, his own "private island."

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you describe your own "private island," a place you go when you need to be alone. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your response.

Mythology in Advertising

Many large companies use figures from Greek mythology to advertise products that we commonly use. These characters are often chosen for their apparent strengths and acts of courage and sacrifice. Imagine that a major sports drink company has asked you to choose a mythological character to use as a symbol for a new sport drink. What character would you choose, and what are some of the characteristics that make this character a perfect choice?

In a detailed essay, describe how you would use a character from Greek mythology as a symbol for a sport drink. Use references from the myth to support your description.

Natural Disasters

America is a beautiful land, yet it is subject to all manner of natural disasters, from tornados in the Midwest to hurricanes in the Southeast, blizzards in the Northeast to earthquakes in the West. Think about one of these natural disasters that you may have experienced or about which you have read. How do you think the nation can better prepare for another such disaster? Is there anything that you can do to be ready?

Write an essay in which you describe how you think the nation and its people should prepare for another natural disaster. Be sure to use details and reasons to support the choices you make.

Negative Effects of Electronic Communication

Cell phones, television, the Internet, and other forms of electronic communication have undoubtedly had a huge effect on children growing up in the twenty-first century. While we all enjoy the benefits of electronic communication, what about the dangers? In some ways, these new communication methods can put children and teens in danger or cause anti-social behaviors, which may have negative effects on families.

Using your readings, your own personal experiences, and the experiences of others you know, write a multi-paragraph essay describing the negative effects these new communication technologies have had or can have on children and teenagers in the modern age.

New Year's Resolutions

Every year, many people resolve to change things they did not like about the year before. These are called resolutions. Think about the past year and things you may want to change in the coming year.

In a detailed essay, discuss your resolution goals for the coming year and your plans for how you will achieve them.

Operating a Complex Mechanical Device

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you describe the process to set up and operate a new cell phone. Do not simply list the steps; rather, use complete sentences and fully formed paragraphs to describe the process in detail to someone who has just purchased this new cell phone.

Opportunities for Immigrants

The Statue of Liberty was a gift to the United States from the people of France. It has come to be seen as a symbol to the world that the United States is "the land of opportunity." Assume the role of one of the millions of people who immigrated to the United States in the late 1800s. Write about why you want to come to the United States and what opportunities you hope to take advantage of. Your composition should describe at least three things that the immigrants hoped to obtain and why each of these things is so important to you as an immigrant.

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People Change

People change over time. Think of a person you know who has changed over time. What was this person like in the past and what is this person like now? How has this change affected you?

Write an essay explaining how this person has changed and how this change has affected you.

Principal for a Week

Imagine that you are the principal of your school for just one week. Think about your most important tasks and why they are important. What would you change? What would you keep the same?

Write a letter to your teacher explaining your plan.

Problems with a Close Friend

In life, it is often a challenge to find a friend with whom you can share just about anything. When we do find a close friend like this, it is important to keep your friendship free from conflict, but problems can develop from just about anything. Think of a time when you were having a serious problem with a close friend. What was the problem? How did you resolve your issues?

In a well-developed essay, describe the problem that you were having with your friend and how you dealt with it. Include details and examples to support your description.

Qualities of a Good Listener

Have you ever heard someone complain that someone heard what he/she was saying, but that this person did not actually listen to what was being said? What are some qualities of a good listener?

In a detailed essay, explain the qualities of a good listener, and provide examples from your life when you either practiced or did not practice good listening skills.

Recipe for Success

"Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experiences of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired, and success achieved." - Helen Keller
Helen Keller believed that the recipe for success includes a personal struggle that leads to a greater understanding of the world and oneself. If you were asked to create a recipe for success, what traits and experiences would you say are the most important to include?

In a detailed essay, describe your recipe for success and discuss the traits and experiences that would be included in the ingredients.

Reflect on Your Math Ability

How do you feel about your math ability as a middle school student? What activities have helped you understand mathematics?

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Society's Biggest Problem

In our society we face a number of problems, such as crime, poverty, and pollution. What do you think is the biggest problem we face in our society today, and why is it a serious issue?

Write an essay explaining the issue or problem you have chosen and why it is having such a negative effect on our society.

The California Gold Rush

Imagine you are living during the time of the California Gold Rush. Write a multi-paragraph essay depicting the experiences people faced during their journey to California. Make sure to include details, such as how the travelers prepared for their trip, the hardships they suffered, the frame of mind they were in, and other relevant information.

The Effects of Eating Disorders on Teens

Eating disorders are an important concern, especially for teens, whose bodies are at a critical stage of development. Early eating habits affect a body's health for many years beyond the teen years. Severe cases of some types of eating disorders are fatal. What are some of the eating disorders currently affecting teenagers? Why are these disorders unhealthy? How do they affect a teenager's future health?

In a well-developed essay, describe the eating disorders that are affecting teenagers and the impact the effects of these disorders have on their current and future health. Include facts and details to support your description.

The Effects of Substance Abuse

We all have been warned about the dangers of abusing substances such as alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs. Why do you think substance abuse is so dangerous?

Write a multi-paragraph essay examining the consequences of substance abuse. Make sure to include specific details and examples to support your analysis.

The Holocaust: Conditions in Pre-War Germany

In the years prior to the Holocaust, German society experienced profound changes. What were the political, social, and economic conditions like in Germany that enabled Adolf Hitler to assume power and set the stage for the Holocaust to occur?

Decide what pre-war conditions you believe were the most important precursors to the Holocaust. Using the Internet, books, or other resources, gather research about these conditions. Then, write a well-developed essay in which you present this information and explain why you think these conditions were so important.

The Holocaust: Outside Intervention

In looking back at the Holocaust, historians have noted that while some groups risked their lives to rescue Holocaust victims, including the Allied troops who ultimately liberated the death camps, other groups were reluctant to intervene on behalf of the victims.

Choose one of these two kinds of groups, either those who acted to help the victims of the Holocaust or those who did not, and gather research about the topic. You may use the Internet, books, or other resources to gather information. Then, write a well-developed essay in which you present the information. Why do you think the group you researched acted as it did?

The Scientific Method

The scientific method is a process used by scientists to develop, construct, and test reliable theories to explain natural phenomena.

Identify and explain three different ways that you use the scientific method to solve problems in your own life.

Steps of the Scientific Method

1. State the Problem
2. Gather Information and Research
3. Form a Hypothesis
4. Perform an Experiment
5. Collect and Analyze Data
6. Form a Conclusion

The Story Told by Egyptian Tomb Artifacts

Much of what we have learned from ancient civilizations has been gathered from tomb sites. Artifacts in the pyramids have enabled us to understand much about the culture. If you were an Egyptian Pharaoh, what items might be found in your tomb? What would these items tell us about your life and times?

In a well-developed essay, describe the items which would be found in your tomb if you were a Pharaoh. Include facts and details to support your description.

The Three Branches of the US Government

The US government is composed of three distinct branches - the executive, legislative, and judicial - each with its own duties and powers. The authors of the US Constitution separated the powers of these

three branches and instituted a system of checks and balances so that each branch had some way to limit the power of the other two.

In a well-developed essay, discuss what specific powers the legislative, executive, and judicial branches have and why the powers are separated. Be sure to discuss how each branch limits the power of the others.

Tourist Attractions in World Cities

Imagine that you are a world traveler who writes travel books and articles for a living. Your assignment is to write an informative travel article about any foreign city you choose, focusing particularly on the tourist attractions and sights that this city offers.

In a well-developed essay, discuss the sights and attractions in a foreign city. Write your essay for an audience that is unfamiliar with this city.

Trading Places

Often we dream of trading places with a person whom we respect or admire or someone living an exciting or interesting life. If you could trade places with someone, whom would you choose? Would you want to experience this person's fame, talent, or some other aspect of his/her life?

In a detailed essay, identify the person with whom you would like to trade places for one day, and give reasons for your choice. Include facts and details to support your explanation.

Treating People Better

Many people believe that the way we treat our fellow man has worsened over the years. If you were asked to improve the main problem in the way we treat one another, what problem would you choose and how would you fix it?

In a detailed essay, discuss the problem you would choose to fix in order to improve the way we treat our fellow man. Use facts and examples to support your discussion.

Using the Five Themes of Geography

Geographers focus on five themes when studying places around the world. They consider location; physical and human characteristics; interaction of people and the environment; movement of people, goods, and ideas; and regions found in a geographic area.

In a detailed, multi-paragraph essay, discuss the geography of a place you have studied. Consider the five themes of geography in your discussion, and provide specific details so the readers can clearly picture the place you studied in their minds.

Visiting an Interesting Place

There are many interesting places in the world. Different regions of the world have different cultures, geographies, climates, sights, and activities. If you could choose to visit one place in the world that you have never been before, where would it be? Why?

What Do You Desire Most?

There is more to life than material wealth, and it's those other desires that drive us to achieve. Think about what you actually desire most, above and beyond money and possessions. Write a multi-paragraph essay which discusses what you really want. Be specific and include details and examples.

What Have You Learned?

Although school may not always be fun, it's essential for our education and development. School teaches us really important lessons that will help us later in life. What is the most important thing you have learned in school so far?

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you discuss one thing school has taught you and its importance to your life and your future. Use specific examples and details to support your response.

What If You Never Slept?

Imagine if your body no longer needed sleep at night to function properly. Suddenly, you have an additional 8 hours each day to do whatever you want. Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you explain what you would do with all of that extra time you have.

What is Empathy?

Dictionaries commonly define empathy as the ability to understand another person's situation or feelings. As we all know, this can be a challenging task at times.

What do you think it takes to be an empathetic person? Do you consider yourself to be an empathetic person? Why or why not? Write an essay in which you use specific examples from your life to discuss your understanding of empathy and whether you are an empathetic person.

What Kind of Artist Would You Be?

There are many different forms of fine art, like painting, music, and theatre. If you could be any type of artist, what kind would you be?

In a well-developed essay, discuss the type of artist you would like to be. Include facts and examples to support your discussion.

What Learning Style Best Suits You?

Educators have long known that different students learn in different ways. For example, some students learn best by hearing information, some by seeing information. For each style of learning, there are more effective ways to learn and study. What type of learner are you? What strategies have you developed to better help you learn and study based on your style of learning?

In a well-developed essay, discuss your style of learning and how you have developed effective strategies for learning and studying based on your learning style. Use examples and details to support your discussion.

What Would You Tell the Founding Fathers?

The Founding Fathers of the United States of America had a vision for the country they established. It has been over two centuries since those fearless men risked their lives for the principles they believed to be essential for a prosperous nation. If you could speak with the Founding Fathers, what would you tell them?

Research the founding of the United States and the men who were instrumental in that process. Then, write a multi-paragraph essay discussing what you would tell the Founding Fathers. Use your research to answer who, what, when, where, and why in your discussion.

What's in a Name?

Each of us has a name that makes us unique and helps to identify who we are. Yet, few people know the meaning or origin of their names.

Explore the origin of your name. Using books, the Internet, or other resources, research the etymology of your name, its use in mythology or religion, and the naming traditions of your family or culture. Then, write a well-developed essay in which you discuss the meaning of your name and what makes it unique to you.

Where Would You Like to Live?

Do you love the fast-paced city life, or do you prefer the laid back country lifestyle? If you could choose to live in either the city or the country, which option would work best for you? Write a multi-paragraph essay explaining what lifestyle you'd choose and your reasons for coming to that decision.

Where Would You Like to Visit?

Where is one place in the world you would like to visit? Explain why you would want to visit this place, and what you would want to do or see once you arrive. Include specific details and examples in your response.

Pilot Prompts

A Character's Perseverance in a Literary Work (pilot)

In times of difficulty, opposition, or discouragement, some people find the strength to persevere. Think about a character who demonstrates perseverance in a literary work. How do the words and actions of this literary character illustrate his/her perseverance?

In a multi-paragraph essay, analyze the words and actions of a literary character that demonstrate perseverance during the course of the story. Be sure to support your analysis with relevant evidence from the literary work.

A Meal That Tells a Story (pilot)

Many cultures have traditions centered on food. In the Jewish culture, families eat Seder meals to celebrate the escape of the Israelites from Egypt. During Ramadan, Muslim families commemorate the first revelation of the Quran to Muhammad with food after sunset. In these and many other celebrations, the meal is more than a meal; it is symbolic of something that happened in the past that is remembered through the sharing of a special meal.

Think about a special meal you have enjoyed, witnessed, or read about that "tells a story." This meal might take place during a particular holiday or yearly celebration. In a multi-paragraph essay, inform your readers about a meal, the significance of the food, and the tradition or history it represents. Be sure to include sensory details so readers can fully appreciate the experience you describe.

Are We Protecting our Freshwater Ecosystem? (pilot)

We have attempted to protect our freshwater ecosystems with governmental policies. How effective have these policies been?

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss the governmental policies designed to protect a freshwater ecosystem and their effect on the current condition of the ecosystem. Use facts and details to support your discussion.

Art Forms and Culture (pilot)

Every art form, like dance (e.g., salsa dancing), has strong cultural roots. What are some other art forms that can be connected with a certain culture?

In a detailed essay, discuss a particular art form of your choosing (some form of dance, music, painting, literature, etc.), as well as its cultural connection and background. Provide details and examples from your own experiences, readings, or observations.

Balancing Personal Liberty and National Security (pilot)

Think about the Alien and Sedition Acts and suspension of habeas corpus during the Civil War. How did this affect the balance of personal liberty with national security?

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss how our country is still balancing personal liberty with national security. Use facts and details to support your discussion.

Behavioral Strategies from a Video (pilot)

Videos like those in the *Bridging the Gap* series present students with information and behaviors that can help them in difficult situations. One example presented in the series discusses how to handle conflict resolution or manage your anger. What new information and/or strategies did the video present for you and your classmates? How will you use this information or these strategies?

In a well-developed essay, discuss the topic and additional information or strategy presented in the video you watched. Include facts and details from the video to support your discussion.

Benefits of a Thoughtful Act (pilot)

Thoughtful acts can take many forms, such as unexpected help or even just a kind word. Explain how a thoughtful act can benefit those involved. Use specific details and examples in your response.

Benefits of Having a Good Attitude (pilot)

People often credit their successes to having good attitudes. Explain the benefits of having a good attitude, even during a difficult time. Provide examples from your own experience or from having witnessed this in others.

Better to Take Risks? (pilot)

Is it better to take risks and perhaps make some mistakes or remain cautious and risk nothing? Explain using specific details and examples in your response.

Can Competition Improve Life? (pilot)

Competition is a constant presence in today's schools, where students not only compete with one another in the classroom but also in sports and in various extracurricular activities. Explain how competition can improve life or make it more difficult for students. Use specific details and examples in your response.

Causes and Effects of the Crusades (pilot)

A major animation film company plans to make an animated movie about the Crusades. The company is sponsoring a competition to select the best writer to create the movie script. The winner will be awarded a full scholarship to the college of his or her choice. In addition, the winner could use the opportunity to launch a career as a filmmaker. You have decided to submit a script. Now you must research the Crusades to ensure historical accuracy in your script.

Write a report in which you explain what you believe to be the most significant causes and effects of the Crusades through the perspective of Europeans. Cite (reference) specific examples from your sources to support your ideas.

Changes in the Sky (pilot)

We can observe many changes in the sky. Changes in the elements of weather and heavenly bodies occur night and day. What changes in the daytime sky have you observed? What changes in the night sky have you observed?

In a well-developed essay, describe changes that you have observed in the sky. Include facts and details to support your description.

Charles Darwin, Natural Selection, and the Galapagos Islands (pilot)

Charles Darwin is famous for his trip to the Galapagos Islands, where he found evidence to support the theory of natural selection. In a detailed essay, discuss the evidence collected by Charles Darwin on his trip aboard the H.M.S. Beagle which supports the theory of natural selection. Include facts and details to support your discussion.

Civil War as a Test of Democracy (pilot)

"Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure."

-From the November 19, 1863 Gettysburg Address by Abraham Lincoln

Abraham Lincoln considered the Civil War a test of the democratic foundation of the United States of America. What tenets of democracy were being tested? What democratic process would he have suggested for the resolution of the conflict that caused the Civil War?

In a well-developed essay, discuss the Civil War as a test of democracy in the United States of America. Use facts and examples to support your discussion.

Collecting as a Hobby (pilot)

Collecting is a fun hobby in which a person finds, gathers, and takes care of each part of a set of things. Collectors have a passion for collecting items such as stamps, coins, baseball cards, toys, records, or comic books that are rare and, in time, could grow to be worth a great deal of money. If you do not already have a collection started, what would you like to collect?

In a well-developed essay, discuss a collection you may have started or would like to start. You might include the different ways you have to care for the items you have collected, and how and where you would display your collection.

Comparing Artwork (pilot picture)



Claude Monet, *Impression—Sunrise*, 1872



Pierre Auguste Cot, *The Storm*, 1880

Two paintings that demonstrate an interesting overlap in artistic movements are “The Storm” by Pierre Auguste Cot and “Impression—Sunrise” by Claude Monet. Both works were painted by French artists during a span of less than a decade; yet, there are some very noticeable differences between the two paintings.

In a multi-paragraph response, compare and contrast both paintings. You might want to draw attention to the subjects of each painting, the colors used, and the artists’ techniques. Be visually descriptive, and use both replications of the paintings as a guide.

Consumer Complaint (pilot)

Corporations know how valuable consumers' comments are to continually improve their products or services. Consumer complaints, although unpleasant, provide opportunities for companies to facilitate changes for increased customer satisfaction and healthy bottom lines.

Imagine you decide to write to a company to complain about its product(s) or service(s). In a multi-paragraph letter to a corporation, present feedback on a negative experience you have had with its product(s) or service(s). Include details to present the situation clearly and maintain an appropriate tone for a business communication.

Contrasting the Developing Colonized Regions (pilot)

As immigration to the New World increased, four different geographical regions developed: New England, Middle, Southern, and Backcountry. Analyze these regions considering the influences of family, education, religion, government, and economy.

Write a multi-paragraph essay analyzing and contrasting these regions. Include facts and details to support your analyses.

Definition of Success (pilot)

What makes someone a success? Explain how you define success, using specific details and examples in your response.

Describe a Mnemonic (pilot)

A mnemonic is a formula, rhyme, or other device that serves as a memory aid. A mnemonic for the order of the planets (including Pluto) is "My very excitable mother just served us nine pizzas," in which the first letter in each word stands for the first letter of a planet. What information that you had to learn for school have you remembered by using a mnemonic? What was the mnemonic?

In a well-developed essay, describe a mnemonic that you developed to help remember information for school and how you used that mnemonic as a memory aid.

Describe Polygons (pilot)

Describe various polygons using the concepts of parallel and perpendicular lines.

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Description of a Painting (pilot)

Imagine that you are a curator of an art museum, which is featuring a painting for an upcoming exhibit. A large group of people are coming this weekend to a preview reception for the exhibit, and you must describe this work of art to your audience. Is the painting a landscape or an abstract? What colors are used? What kind of feeling do you get from this work of art?

Choose a particular painting, and, in a detailed essay, describe your painting to a prospective audience of museum visitors. Remember to include vivid descriptions and use imagery when possible.

Design a Complex Machine (pilot)

The wedge, inclined plane, screw, lever, pulley, and wheel and axle are simple machines. Two or more simple machines combined are called a complex machine. Imagine that you are a very imaginative inventor working on a complex machine. What function would your complex machine perform? What simple machines would be part of your complex machine?

In a well-developed essay, describe the complex machine you would invent including its simple machine components.

Design a Neighborhood of the Future (pilot)

Your assignment is to design a neighborhood of the future. Explain what you would include in a neighborhood of the future and why. Include specific details and examples in your design.

Differences and Similarities between the Inner and Outer Planets (pilot)

Due to their location in our solar system, the planets can be categorized as inner or outer planets. In a detailed essay, discuss the major differences and similarities between the inner and outer planets. Include facts and details on planet size, composition, location in the solar system, moons, and atmosphere to support your discussion.

Directions for Staying Healthy (pilot)

Staying healthy is important. Think about the steps a person needs to take to stay healthy. Write directions for staying healthy.

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Dream Award (pilot)

Some people dream of winning a Nobel Prize, an Olympic medal, an Oscar, or even a scholarship! What award would you like to pursue?

In a multi-paragraph essay, describe the award that you would like to receive. Include details about the award and what you would do to earn it.

Earning Something Special (pilot)

What are the advantages of earning your own money to purchase something special? Explain the advantages using specific details and examples in your response.

Enforcing a Stricter School Dress Code (pilot)

Teachers and parents frequently complain that school dress codes are not effectively enforced. Think about how your school dress code can be more effectively enforced. Now write to explain how your school dress code can be more effectively enforced.

Enjoyable Educational Activity (pilot)

Identify an enjoyable educational activity. It could be participating in a play, completing a science experiment, playing an instrument, or something else. Use specific details and examples to explain why the activity is enjoyable.

Enjoying Time Spent Outdoors (pilot)

Community parks, state parks, and national parks provide a wide variety of interesting activities. Write about an enjoyable way to spend time outdoors. Using specific details and examples, explain why someone might find that activity enjoyable.

Experiencing Different Historical Times (pilot)

The *Living History* video series invites viewers to explore the ways of life experienced by people in different times and places in history.

After carefully examining the place and time discussed in a selected video, write a well-developed essay in which you discuss what living in that time and place would be like. Be sure to include facts and details from the video to support your discussion on topics such as daily life, tools, food, education, roles of men, women, and children in the time period, etc.

Explain the Simplification of a Math Expression (pilot)

Read the math problem.

Explain the steps you would take to completely simplify the expression $[3+(6+4)^2\div 5]\times 2$.
(Note: 2 stands for squared or to the second power)

In a detailed essay, discuss the strategy you would use to solve the problem. A complete essay will include the steps you would perform, the order in which you would perform them, and the reason you would solve the problem using this strategy. Although a correct answer is important, it is more important that you discuss the process of solving the problem with as much detail as possible. Be sure to use words in place of symbols and numbers in your essay.

Favorite Activity (pilot)

Everyone has an activity they enjoy doing. It might be playing an instrument or a sport. Think about what you enjoy doing the most.

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss an activity you enjoy and why you like this activity so much.

Feature Article Depicting an Event (pilot)

Throughout our lives, we experience, observe, hear, and read about many important events. Think about some historically significant events. In preparing to write a feature article on a historical event, what questions might you ask about the event or in an interview with someone who personally experienced the event?

In a well-developed feature article, write about a significant historical event. Remember to describe what happened and when it happened. Also be sure to include a variety of facts, details, and examples.

Forming an Opinion on Race (pilot)

Parents, grandparents, and other family members are often seen as a child's first teachers. The way children speak, act, and think can be influenced by those around them. A child's attitude toward others can be shaped by what is modeled in his or her daily life. Think about what you have learned from your family about race, which is defined as a group of people who share a common culture or history. What opinions have you formed about other races from your parents, grandparents, or other family members? What are the different ways that they talk about race? How do they shape or influence your opinion?

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss your family members' attitudes toward other races and explain how those attitudes shape or influence your thoughts about race. Include specific details to support your ideas so the readers can fully understand your opinion.

Ghost Stories in Our Towns (pilot)

Each American city has at least one ghost story. For example, in New Hope (a historic town in Bucks County, Pa.), the Logan Inn, a hotel and restaurant, is known for stories of several ghosts believed to haunt its walls. What ghost stories have you heard about the town in which you live (or a nearby town)?

In a detailed essay, discuss ghost stories from your hometown or a nearby town. Include details to support your discussion.

Historic Landmarks (pilot)

The United States is full of historic landmarks; your own town might even be home to at least one historic landmark. In a detailed essay, describe a particular landmark and the history that surrounds it.

Homemade Gift (pilot)

Sometimes the best gift you can give someone is a gift that you make yourself. If you were going to make or build a gift for a friend or family member, what would it be? How would you make it? Why would this gift be appreciated or liked by the person receiving it?

In a well-developed essay, describe a gift you would like to build or make for a friend or family member. Be sure to add details as you describe the gift.

How an Author Can Affect Your Writing (pilot)

Attending a book signing or an authors' festival, listening to an author interview, or even inviting an author to visit your school can offer personal insight into the minds of these writers. After gaining such a personal view of an author, which writer do you most respect and enjoy? What did the author say in a talk, interview, panel discussion, or to you personally that truly touched you and made you look at your own writing in a different way? How did the author's words inspire you to become a better writer?

In a well-developed essay, discuss how an author has affected you and your writing. In which area of your writing have they had the biggest effect? Be sure to include what the author said that inspired you to become a better writer.

How Art Affects My Life (pilot)

Art can affect our lives in many different ways. There are several different types of art, including visual and performing arts. When you watch a movie or listen to music, you are observing art. Think

about how often you interact with either of these art forms. Does art inspire you? How is your life affected by the arts?

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss how art affects your everyday life. Explain how your life might be different without the arts. Use examples and personal experience to support your discussion.

How Do We Use Fractions? (pilot)

Describe different ways in which fractions are used in mathematics and in life outside of school.

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How do You Feel About Public Speaking? (pilot)

Some people enjoy public speaking while others are frightened by it. Using specific details and examples, explain how you feel about public speaking.

How Would You Change Your School? (pilot)

If you could make a significant change to the structure or appearance of your school, what would it be? Identify the change you would make, and explain why you would make it.

How You Use a Talent or Skill (pilot)

Everyone has a talent or skill. Identify a talent or skill you have, and explain how you develop and use it. Use specific details and examples in your response.

Human Error Causes Disaster (pilot)

From the radiation release at Chernobyl to the sinking of the Titanic, flawed decisions and human shortcomings have caused major disasters. Could these disasters have been averted? How did the disaster impact future decision making?

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss a disaster caused by human error or flawed decisions. Consider including in your discussion the ramifications of the event and impact on future decisions.

Identifying a New Species (pilot)

Although we hear everyday of species being lost to extinction, there are also new species yet to be discovered in remote areas of the earth. Scientists use a system originally devised by Linnaeus to classify living things. If you were a scientist conducting research in a remote region and discovered a unique organism, how would you determine whether it was a new species? What would be the process for classifying it?

In a well-developed essay, discuss how you would classify a new organism. Use facts and examples to support your discussion.

Impact of a Book, Song or Movie (pilot)

Books, songs, and movies often hold great meaning to people. Sometimes books, songs, and movies cause an emotional connection; we feel just like one of the characters. Other times books, songs, and movies cause us to think about life in a new way. Write an essay explaining how a book, song, or movie can have an impact on our lives.

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Impact of Religious Beliefs on Society (pilot)

What impact do religious beliefs have on the values and social rules of a society? How do certain religious beliefs affect the everyday routines of people? Why might these religious differences become problematic for different groups of people who live near each other?

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss the impact of religious beliefs on the values and social rules of a society. Use facts and details to support your discussion.

Impact of Settlement in the Americas (pilot)

Settlement in the Americas had a tremendous impact on indigenous peoples. To what extent did colonists and indigenous societies influence each other?

Using reliable sources, write a multi-paragraph essay describing the impacts indigenous and colonist societies had on each other. Include facts and details to support your description.

Importance of Budgeting Time (pilot)

Students often learn how to budget their time in order to complete important tasks and still have time for themselves. Explain how learning to budget time is an important skill for students. Use specific details and examples in your response.

Important Archeological Discoveries (pilot)

Have you ever wanted to learn about what life was like hundreds or even thousands of years ago? The people who study ancient artifacts are called *archeologists* and they have made many important discoveries.

In a multi-paragraph essay, pick what you think is the most important archeological discovery and explain why it is significant and how it has affected us today.

Improving Television (pilot)

When television originated, the screens only displayed black and white images and there were very few channels. Since then, televisions have evolved to include hundreds of channels, thousands of programs, and lifelike pictures and sounds.

Where does television go from here? Write a multi-paragraph essay describing how you think television will evolve in the future.

Inherited and Learned Traits (pilot)

You are a unique person. Write about yourself in a scientific way. Explain heredity and give examples of inherited, as well as learned, traits.

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Is Peter Pan a Hero? (pilot)

In the story of Peter Pan, Peter and his friends stay in Neverland never wanting to grow up. Peter offers Wendy and her siblings the choice of staying with him and remaining children, or going back home and dealing with the challenges of becoming adults. Many who have read Peter's story believe that his youthful nature is heroic in the sense that Peter will always be free of the rules, structures, and disappointments that adults face. However, there are many who feel that Peter is actually a very cowardly character who is hiding as a child, afraid of getting older and gaining responsibility.

In a detailed essay, describe whether or not you believe that Peter's ideas make him heroic or cowardly for not embracing the world of the adults.

Island Currency (pilot)

Pretend that you have been stranded on an island with your classmates and that you have to create a currency system that everyone on the island will use. The available resources are the tropical forest full of varied flora and fauna, the shells and pebbles that cover the beaches, the limestone cliffs which border one end of the island, and the few possessions that students have with them.

In a well-developed essay, describe the system of currency you will propose and explain how your island community will use it. Be sure to use specific details and examples in your essay.

Journal Entry of a West African (pilot)

West Africans were faced with many dilemmas during slave trade. In West Africa, the dilemma was trading slaves for guns from Europeans in order to prevent being overtaken by a more powerful tribe. During the Middle Passage, the dilemma was trying to stay alive despite horrendous circumstances, or to escape and risk being killed, or to try to starve themselves to death. In the Colonies, the dilemma was deciding to run away and risk severe punishment; to resist work by breaking tools, working slowly, acting sick, and singing songs with secret messages; or to work hard and obey the rules and hope for better treatment.

Imagine that you are a West African caught up in the slave trade in the early 1700s. Write a journal entry describing one day of your life either while living in West Africa or during the Middle Passage, or while living in the Colonies. Include in your journal entry an accurate description of the dilemma you faced and what happened to you on that day.

Learning a Second Language (pilot)

Many schools offer students the opportunity to learn a second language. Imagine that your school gives students the choice to study any language they wish. What language would you like to learn?

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you describe the language you would like to study and the reasons behind your choice. Use specific examples and details to support your response.

Learning about Careers (pilot)

The *Get a Life!* video series presents a variety of career choices to students like you. Here, you can learn more about a number of fields, including health sciences, social work, software consulting and information technology, engineering, publishing, and broadcasting, multimedia, and the Web.

After viewing a video, in a detailed essay, explain what you learned about this chosen field. Include how the video either influenced you for or against choosing this particular type of job in the future.

Learning from the Experience of Others (pilot)

Write about someone who has shared wisdom and experience with you. Explain why it is important to learn from the experience of others. Include specific details and examples in your response.

Legendary Creatures from Folklore (pilot)

Famous or legendary creatures play a big part in the folklore of every culture. Creatures such as Bigfoot, the Loch Ness Monster, and the Abominable Snowman are folklore legends that capture the imagination.

In a detailed essay, describe a legendary creature you have heard about. Include why this creature is unique and why so many people believe it exists.

Letter to a Tabloid Editor (pilot)

Every time we visit a local supermarket or drugstore, the headlines of celebrity tabloid newspapers and magazines beckon to us. At one time or another we have all read articles about our favorite or least favorite celebrities. What is your opinion of tabloids? How does their reporting of the news compare to that of other newspapers?

In a letter to the editor of a tabloid publication, articulate your position on the publication's reporting of news.

Making the Right Decision (pilot)

We all make decisions every day—what to eat, what to wear, when to do homework, etc. Some decisions may have seemed minor at the time, but making the right decision turned out to be important. For some decisions, it is important that we spend time considering our options to ensure that we make the right decision. When have you made a decision that turned out to be the right decision?

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss a time when a decision you made was the right one. Include details that will enable the reader to understand why your decision was the right one.

Maximizing Paper Airplane Flight Time (pilot)

Whether a paper airplane is simple or complicated, there are basic parameters which impact its flight: thrust, lift, drag, and gravity. Thrust is the forward movement of the plane. Lift is the upward

movement of the plane, and drag is the resistance to forward movement of the plane. Gravity is the downward force exerted on the plane. Combined, these parameters determine the duration and distance of the airplane's flight. If you wanted to maximize a paper airplane's flight time, how would it affect the design? Would you adjust the wings, the tail, or the size? What materials would you use?

In a well-developed essay, describe the construction of a paper airplane designed to maximize flight time. Include facts and details to support your description.

Measuring Without a Ruler (pilot)

Imagine that you need to measure the perimeter of your yard in order to purchase a new fence. Unfortunately, you do not have a ruler, yardstick, tape measure, or any other standard measuring tool. How will you complete the task of measuring the yard?

In a multi-paragraph essay, explain how you will go about measuring the perimeter of your yard. Remember to address each difficulty you will encounter and how you will handle it.

My Favorite Sports Team (pilot)

Team sports play a major role in the lives of many people who closely follow the competition and anticipate the excitement of each game. Some even relate the symbolism of the teams to their own lives. Each of us has a favorite team with which we live the exciting highs and suffer the disappointing lows.

In a well-developed essay, write about your favorite team and why it is special. Include details to support your description of the team.

My Year as an Exchange Student (pilot)

Imagine that your school has asked you to become part of a student exchange program that allows you to spend a year in another country and experience their customs and ways of life. What country would you choose and what are some of the things you would do with your new family?

In a detailed essay, describe the exchange student experience you would most enjoy. Include facts and details to support your description.

Obama's Inauguration as a Moment in History (pilot)

Barack Obama's candidacy, election, and inauguration have been heralded as turning points in American history. Obama's inauguration and the days preceding it were full of references to other historic moments and figures. How will this moment be written into the history of the United States? How will we as citizens participate in this moment?

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss Obama’s entry into the presidency as an important moment in the history of the United States, including our role as citizens in this moment.

Objects and Places That Symbolize a Culture (pilot)

There are objects and places that often remind us of what we stand for as a nation. The Statue of Liberty, which stands tall in New York City Harbor, can be seen as a symbolic representation of our freedom here in the United States of America.

Write an essay about an object or a place that symbolizes your country. You might consider areas or objects of historical significance. Be sure to include specific details or examples of how this is representative of your nation.

One Way You Would Like to Change the World (pilot)

Civil rights leader Mahatma Gandhi wrote, “Be the change you want to see in the world.” What is one way you would like to change the world, and how can you help to bring about this change? Use specific details and examples in your response.

Overcoming a Challenge as a Student (pilot)

Identify a challenge facing students, and use specific details and examples to explain ways to overcome that challenge.

Pairing Younger and Older Students (pilot)

Some schools have a program that pairs older students with younger students. The older students are available to assist the younger students. How would this program help both the older and the younger students? Explain the effects of such a program on the students involved.

Pictorial Advertisement Critique (pilot)

In a given week, we must see/hear hundreds of advertisements, whether they be on TV, on the radio, in magazines or newspapers, on billboards, or in print. Advertisers also use specific propaganda techniques, such as bandwagon, card stacking, glittering generalities, name calling, plain folks, testimonial, and transfer, in order to persuade the public to purchase the product advertised. Choose a pictorial advertisement for a particular product, and analyze the propaganda technique(s) used in the advertisement. Do you think this is an effective advertisement?

In a detailed essay, write an analysis of a specific advertisement, analyzing the message revealed through the image. Include the propaganda technique and effectiveness of the advertisement in your analysis.

Plate Tectonics and the Ring of Fire (pilot)

The theory of plate tectonics is used to explain earthquake and volcanic activity on Earth. The Ring of Fire in the Pacific Ocean is an area noted for frequent earthquake and volcanic activity. How does the plate tectonics theory explain these events?

In a detailed essay, discuss the driving force behind plate tectonic activity and its contribution to the earthquake and volcanic activity experienced in the Ring of Fire. Include facts and details to support your discussion.

Principles of Physics in Star Wars (pilot)

Hollywood movies tend to bend the laws of physics for dramatic effect. After viewing a Star Wars movie, use your critical eye to identify the misuse of scientific principles of force, energy, and motion. Analyze a Star Wars movie to explore situations where matter, energy, and the laws of physics are changed to suit a storyline. In particular, how are Newton's First Law of Motion, and principles of sound, light, and gravity misused?

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss the misuse of the principles of physics in a Star Wars movie. Refer to specific scenes in the movie to support your discussion.

Probability in Our Lives (pilot)

Probability is a measure of how likely it is that some event will occur. Every time we hear the phrases "chances are," "the risk is," or "the likelihood is," we know that probability is involved. In a well-developed essay, discuss the role that probability plays in our lives. Include facts and examples.

Problems As Chances to do Our Best (pilot)

American jazz legend Duke Ellington said, "A problem is a chance for you to do your best." Explain the meaning of this statement and whether you agree or disagree with it. Use specific details and examples in your response.

Protect the Watershed (pilot)

A watershed is an area of land which drains into a body of water - creek, stream, or river. Anything on the land's surface can be carried into the body of water. In addition to affecting local water flora and fauna, a watershed frequently affects drinking water for communities.

Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper persuading readers to take actions to protect the watershed. Include facts to support your views.

Relationship Between Metric Units (pilot)

Explain the relationship between centimeter, meter, and kilometer. Give examples of objects that might be measured using each unit.

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Report on the Works Progress Administration (WPA) - HB Unit 5 Level C (pilot)

Write a brief report for your class that answers the research question, "How did the WPA help the Okies who went to California?" Use the information provided below and add other details from your reading.

First Sample Source: "The Dirty Thirties"

How did the WPA help the Okies who went to California?

Who: The Okies who migrated to California

What: They got jobs in construction and received medical care and education

How: The WPA provided money, jobs, and training

When: During the Great Depression and Dust Bowl Years

Why: Because the Okies had no money or land

Second Sample Source: "World Book" Vol. 21, page 405

How did the WPA help the Okies who went to California?

What: WPA-Works Progress Administration (1935,1939)

Who: Started by President Roosevelt

When: From 1935 through 1943

Why: To preserve the skills and self-respect of victims of the Great Depression

Where: All over the country

How: By providing jobs for millions of people

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Responding to a Quote by Muhammad Ali (pilot)

"Hating people because of their color is wrong. And it doesn't matter which color does the hating. It's just plain wrong." - Muhammad Ali

Muhammad Ali's quote about hating people because of their color is simple yet far-reaching. The statement, "And it doesn't matter which color does the hating" sends the message that there is no acceptable excuse for hatred, and it should not be tolerated. Ali was famous for his sayings in the 1960s and 1970s when he was celebrated as a prize-winning boxer. How meaningful to society is Ali's quote today?

In a detailed essay, discuss whether Muhammad Ali's quote about hatred is as meaningful today as it was during the 1960s and 1970s. Be sure to use facts and details from your readings and studies to support your discussion.

Re-writing a Movie (pilot)

Almost every person has watched a movie and thought to themselves "I could come up with a better story." Imagine that a famous movie producer has called and asked you to write an improved version of a popular movie. What are some of the important changes you would make, and how would your version be better than the original?

In a detailed essay, tell of the improvements that you would make to a popular movie. Include details and examples of the changes you would make.

Rituals of the American Indian (pilot)

Throughout history, rituals have been important in the lives of American Indians. Through the years, some of the rituals have changed and some have been abandoned.

In a multi-paragraph essay, compare and contrast the historical and contemporary rituals of the American Indian. Include facts, details, and examples to support your discussion.

Second Chance (pilot)

There are often times when we wish we had a second chance to do something. Think about a time when you wished you had a second chance. Describe that time or event, what happened, and what you might do differently if you had a second chance.

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Sharing an Important Lesson (pilot)

You have been asked to share a lesson with elementary school students. Using specific details and examples, explain the lesson and why it would be important.

Similarities Between You and a Fictional Character (pilot)

Sometimes people recognize similarities between themselves and a character from a book or a movie. Write about a character from a book or a movie who you think is similar to you.

What do you have in common with this character? Use specific details and examples in your response.

Sketching Across the Professions (pilot)

Many artists throughout the course of time have created sketches as a way to work on an idea before completing the finished piece. However, sketches are not only used by artists; they can also be used by other professionals.

In an informative essay, discuss how a person other than an artist might use sketching in his or her job. Be sure to include details and examples for support.

Small Acts of Kindness (pilot)

The ancient Greek storyteller Aesop said, “No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.” Explain how small acts of kindness can have an impact on others. Use specific details and examples in your response.

Something I Learned (pilot)

People learn things in school and in life. What is the most important thing you have ever learned? You may have learned how to do something or learned a valuable lesson.

Write a multi-paragraph essay about the most important lesson you have learned. Include reasons why this lesson was so important to you.

(Spanish) Favorite Form of Entertainment (pilot)

Todos tenemos una película favorita, un libro o un programa de televisión preferido. Escribe un ensayo que esté bien desarrollado para ser leído por el director de la escuela y que contenga el comentario de tu película favorita, tu libro o programa de televisión preferido explicando el porque elegiste este libro, película o programa.

Speaking Out in *Speak* (pilot)

In *Speak*, by Laurie Halse Andersen, Melinda keeps a secret about something terrible which has happened to her. This causes her friends to misunderstand her role in a situation and treat her as an outcast. When she finally speaks out, her friends' misunderstanding is corrected, they rally around her, and her life improves drastically.

In a well-developed essay, discuss how speaking out about a terrible experience in your life can help you heal and move forward.

Splitting the Class into Groups (pilot)

Read the math problem.

A teacher wants to split the class into groups for a project. The class is made up of 24 students- 14 girls and 10 boys. If the teacher wants 6 equal groups, what is the best way to set up the groups while making the ratio of boys to girls in each group as even as possible? Explain your reasoning.

In a detailed essay, discuss the strategy you would use to solve the problem. A complete essay will include the steps you would perform, the order in which you would perform them, and the reason you would solve the problem using this strategy. Although a correct answer is important, it is more important that you discuss the process of solving the problem with as much detail as possible.

Standing Up for Justice (pilot)

In the story "The Scribe" the main character James helps those less fortunate than him, the illiterate and uneducated, in an attempt to be a hero in his community.

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you describe a historical person who stood up for his or her beliefs regardless of the circumstances he or she encountered and made a difference. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your response.

Starting and Operating Your Own Business (pilot)

Imagine you could start your own business. What type of business would you have? What kinds of things would you need to think about prior to opening your doors for business? What supplies and additional assistance would you need?

In a well-developed essay, detail your plans for starting a new business. Include details on starting up and operating your business.

Steps to Recarpet Your Bedroom (pilot)

Explain the steps you would follow if you wanted to recarpet and repaint your bedroom.

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Summer Experiences (pilot)

Now that summer has come to an end, reflect on some of the things you did during the past three months. Did you experience something new? Did you take a trip? Did you learn any lessons since leaving school last spring?

In a detailed response, write about one of your summer experiences. Use descriptive details so readers can imagine it in their minds.

Teaching About an Artistic Medium or Genre (pilot)

The *Art Start* video series teaches the basics of various artistic media and genres, including collage, drawing, fiber, painting, mood painting, pastels, sculpture, symbols, and sketching. Imagine that after viewing one or more of the *Art Start* videos, your art teacher assigns you to complete a short presentation teaching about an artistic medium or genre to the class. Which medium or genre would you select, and how would you present it?

In a detailed essay, discuss how you would present your chosen artistic medium or genre to your class. Include information you have learned from the video or an art class and your own experiences. Keep your tone informative, and remember to keep your audience in mind.

Teaching About an Important Individual (pilot)

Imagine you are a teacher and you want to teach your class about an important and well-known individual not included in any textbook. What figure would you discuss with your class? What makes this person special in regards to history, music, science, film, government, art, or culture in general? Has this person been a part of any important or historical events, or are they a modern-day celebrity?

Write a multi-paragraph response explaining which important figure you would like to teach your students about in the classroom. Explain why it is important for your students to learn about this person. Use details and examples to support your ideas.

Teamwork - HB Unit 2 Level A (pilot)

Write an essay about teamwork. Tell your classmates what the team does. Explain why their teamwork is important.

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The Definition of Love (pilot)

Throughout history, people have attempted to define love through verbal expression, literary writings, and personal actions. However, each individual defines love in his or her own unique way. What is your definition of love?

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you define what love really means to you. Include specific details and examples from what you have read, heard, and experienced in your interpretation.

The End of the School Year - HB Unit 4 Level B (pilot)

Write a guide for new middle school students. Explain how to prepare for the end of the school year. Choose from the following list of ideas to help you start your guide:

1. Plan and sign up for summer jobs or activities.
2. Get a list of books to read this summer.
3. Study for and complete all final exams.
4. Turn in all make-up or extra-credit assignments.
5. Clean out your locker.

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The Impact of Slavery and Servitude (pilot)

Slavery and servitude have existed throughout history. Select a historical time period and describe how slavery evolved during that time and what it impacted.

After researching reliable sources, write a multi-paragraph essay describing the impact of slavery during a chosen time period. Include facts and details to support your description.

The Importance of Grasslands (pilot)

Grassland biomes throughout the world serve many important functions. There are two types of grassland biomes: temperate and tropical. They provide a home to many fascinating species of plants and animals, and they play an integral role in helping to balance our planet's delicate ecosystem. However, in recent years, many grassland areas have become threatened due to urbanization and the increasing demand on agricultural production.

In a multi-paragraph essay, describe what you know about grasslands and why it is important to preserve grassland areas. Be sure to use facts, details, and examples for support.

The Importance of Place Value for Sprint Times (pilot)

Read the math problem.

Five students on the track team finished a sprint with the following times:

15.786 seconds

14.988 seconds

15.794 seconds

15.812 seconds

15.779 seconds

Discuss the importance of place value and explain why the times are not recorded as whole numbers.

In a detailed essay, discuss the strategy you would use to solve the problem. A complete essay will include the steps you would perform, the order in which you would perform them, and the reason you would solve the problem using this strategy. Although a correct answer is important, it is more important that you discuss the process of solving the problem with as much detail as possible.

The Importance of the Moon (pilot)

The earth's moon is one of the most important and essential aspects of human life. Many scientists believed that the moon was formed from loose debris from the earth's formation. However, scientists now believe that the moon is actually leftover material from a massive collision that the forming Earth had with a neighboring planet. It is now theorized that this collision expanded the size of the earth by nearly 10% and allowed for land formations to appear.

The newer and more commonly believed theory of the moon's origin is called The Giant Impact Hypothesis in which the earth collided with a neighboring planet called Theia. Since the planet Theia is thought to have been about the size of Mars, the collision with the larger Earth would have been massive. During this collision, Theia plummeted into the earth's core, while a huge part of Earth and remains of Theia were ejected into Earth's atmosphere. Gravity then began to form our moon from this ejected material.

Evidence to prove this theory has been found in moon rocks collected during the Apollo 1 mission, which are composed of the same materials as Earth rocks. In addition, the orbit of the moon is gradually spinning farther away from Earth, from which we infer that the moon was very close to the earth at one time.

Once the moon was formed, it played a major role in the evolution of life on Earth. At that time, Earth was a wild and chaotic planet of magma. The collision with Theia had added more iron to the earth's core. As the earth's core cooled, outer layers of magma formed into land masses, and the temperature of the oceans and atmosphere dropped significantly. While the earth's gravity kept the moon in orbit, the moon's gravity calmed and lowered the ocean tides on Earth.

If scientists are correct and this is the true origin of our moon, how do you believe complicated life forms such as animals and plants have benefited from the moon's effects on Earth?

In a detailed essay, describe how you believe all life has benefited and continues to benefit from the moon and its formation. Include facts and details to support your description.

The Metric System (pilot)

The adoption of the metric system has been debated internationally for many years. Currently, the metric system is used as the primary system of measurement all over the world except in the United States.

Identify and explain three ways the United States would change if it used the metric system instead of the English system.

The Mona Lisa (pilot picture)



Leonardo da Vinci, *Mona Lisa*, 1503–1506

Leonardo da Vinci's "Mona Lisa" (also known as "La Gioconda") is widely recognized throughout the world. Some even argue that it is the greatest painting ever created, and many critics focus on Mona Lisa's mysterious smile as being the painting's greatest attribute.

Consider how often the "Mona Lisa" is studied and appreciated by people in today's world. In a multi-paragraph essay, describe why you think this painting is so popular and timeless. In your response, be specific and visually descriptive, and use the artwork as a guide.

The Most Significant Chinese Discoveries or Inventions (pilot)

Many inventions and discoveries made by the Chinese have had a major impact on the world. Archaeological and historical records confirm that the Chinese are responsible for inventions ranging from bells and pottery to printing and gunpowder.

In a detailed essay, discuss the most significant Chinese discoveries or inventions and their effects on China and the rest of the world. Include facts and details in your essay to support your discussion.

The US Justice System and The Bill of Rights (pilot)

"In the arguments in favor of a declaration of rights ... one which has great weight with me [is] the legal check which it puts into the hands of the judiciary." -- Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 1789.

The Bill of Rights provides many protections to American citizens. Explain how the Bill of Rights assures that suspects or defendants in the US justice system receive the most fair treatment possible. Be sure to discuss three different amendments and how they protect the rights of the accused in the US justice system.

Unattractive but Special (pilot)

There is a common saying, “Don’t judge a book by its cover.” Think of something that has an unattractive appearance but that has special meaning to someone for other reasons. It might be an old car, a well-used toy, a faded photograph, or something else. Identify the object and explain why it has special meaning.

Using Math to Determine the Size of an Animal Enclosure (pilot)

Read the math problem.

A farmer has 100 feet of fencing to make an enclosure for the animals on the farm. If the farmer wants the area to be rectangular in shape, describe a few possible options and the option that might be the best solution.

In a detailed essay, discuss the strategy you would use to solve the problem. A complete essay will include the steps you would perform, the order in which you would perform them, and the reason you would solve the problem using this strategy. Although a correct answer is important, it is more important that you discuss the process of solving the problem with as much detail as possible.

Using Multiple Opinions to Make a Better Choice (pilot)

When people ask for advice, they sometimes talk to more than one person. Explain why seeking multiple opinions can help someone make a better choice. Use specific details and examples in your response.

Value of Cooperative Learning Groups (pilot)

Teachers frequently place students into cooperative learning groups to complete assignments. Think about your experiences working in cooperative learning groups. Was your group successful in completing the assignment? How did working in the group impact your learning?

In a detailed essay, present your point of view on the value of cooperative learning groups. Use details from your experiences to support your opinion.

Volunteering in Your Community (pilot)

Performing community service is a very beneficial way to contribute to your community. Think of a specific organization in which you performed volunteer work. Or, if you have never volunteered for a specific organization, think of one in which you would like to contribute your time. Why did you choose this specific organization? How did/could your help benefit this organization? In what way did/could this experience benefit you in return?

In a detailed essay, describe a specific volunteer activity you have experienced or would like to experience. Include facts and details to support your description.

War-time Event (pilot)

The historical record includes many examples of military personnel involved in critical war-time events. In some cases, fear of a disastrous outcome was realized, as in the case of Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg in the Civil War. In other cases, fear of a disastrous outcome was not realized, as in the case of the Christmas Eve Battle of Trenton in the Revolutionary War. After selecting a war-time event, research the facts that contributed to the success or failure of that event. What could have been done to avoid disaster, or what factors were critical to success? What have we learned from the event? In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss a war-time event, the factors contributing to its success or failure, and what we have learned from the event. Include facts and details to support your discussion.

Ways to Help Your Family Spend Less (pilot)

Sometimes money can be very tight and families need to cut back on expenses. If your family had to spend less, what are some cost-cutting measures they could adopt? You might suggest ways to cut back on utilities (heating, air conditioning, water, electricity, etc.) or purchases that might not be essential.

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you suggest ways you and your family can spend less. Include facts and details to support your discussion.

What is Loyalty? (pilot)

"Lack of loyalty is one of the major causes of failure in every walk of life." — Napoleon Hill, *Think and Grow Rich*

Loyalty is an important quality for good friends and family to have. How do you define loyalty?

Write a multi-paragraph essay exploring your own conception of what it is that makes a person loyal. Be sure to support your interpretation with specific details and examples from your own experiences or readings.

What It Means to be Patriotic (pilot)

Patriotism means different things to different people. After researching people we call patriots, decide what you think it means to be patriotic.

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss what you think it means to be patriotic. Use facts and details from your research to support your discussion.

What Makes a Good Parent? (pilot)

In *P.S. Longer Letter Later*, the readers learn about some problems the main characters have with their parents: Tara's parents frequently act like children while Elizabeth's father is often absent. Think about your parents or others you have known. What do you think makes a good parent?

In a well-developed essay, discuss how you think a good parent should act. Be sure to support your position with insights you have gained from personal experience or your readings.

What Would You Like to Accomplish? (pilot)

What is something you would like to accomplish in the future? Perhaps you would like to learn how to play an instrument, graduate at the top of your class, or visit the ocean. Identify one thing you would like to accomplish, and include specific details and examples to help explain why it is important.

What Would You Take in an Emergency? (pilot)

When there is an emergency, sometimes people need to flee their homes in only a few minutes. In that short time, they need to decide which of their possessions they will take with them, knowing that those they leave behind may be lost forever. If you had only minutes to collect possessions before evacuating your home, which items would you take? Are these items important because of their monetary or sentimental value?

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss the possessions that you would take with you if you had to evacuate your home quickly. Explain the reasons for your selections to allow the reader to understand your choices.

Who Gives the Best Advice? (pilot)

The Roman philosopher Cicero wrote, "Nobody can give you wiser advice than yourself." However, parents, friends, and teachers often offer advice. Should people listen to their own advice or to the advice of others? Use specific details and examples to support your response.

Who Would You Like to See as President? (pilot)

We all have different ideas about what makes a good president. What do you think makes a person a good candidate for President of the United States?

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you pick a real-life person from the past or present who you would like to see run for president. Be sure to include details that describe why that person would be a good candidate.

Why Does Extinction of a Species Occur? (Pilot)

Explain why an extinction of a species occurs. Use an example you have read or heard about. Summarize what happened to the plant or animal and why.

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Winning Moment (pilot)

Whether making the game winning score for your team, or creating victory for a game or contest that you enjoy, winning moments stay with us throughout our lives. Think of a time in which your actions allowed for you or those close to you to win at something.

In a detailed essay, describe what was done to create a winning moment.

Working at Night (pilot)

While the majority of the workforce in the United States works during the daytime hours and sleeps at night, research has revealed that approximately 20 million people in this country work at night and sleep during the day.

Think about the positive and negative aspects of each of these work patterns. Then, write a multi-paragraph essay discussing which option you would prefer for your future work life. Make sure to include details explaining the benefits of your choice.

Working on the Transcontinental Railroad (pilot)

Imagine you are a worker who helped build the first transcontinental railroad during the 1860s.

Using your readings and in-class discussions, write a multi-paragraph essay describing the conditions, workload, and treatment you experienced while building the transcontinental railroad.

Writing Metacognition Evaluation (pilot)

Review your writing portfolio from class this year. In which writing domains have you shown growth? In which domains have you shown weakness? Which piece makes you especially proud? Why? In a multi-paragraph letter to a language arts teacher, discuss the writings in your current portfolio. Include writing domains in which you have shown growth and weakness, and discuss a piece that makes you especially proud.

Your Generation's Contributions (pilot)

"The story of America isn't about people who quit when things got tough. It's about people who kept going, who tried harder, and who loved their country too much to do anything less than their best. It's the story of students, who sat where you sit 250 years ago, and went on to wage a revolution and found this nation. Students who sat where you sit 75 years ago who overcame a Depression and won a world war; who fought for civil rights and put a man on the moon. Students who sat where you sit 20 years ago who founded Google, Twitter, and Facebook and changed the way we communicate with each other. So today, I want to ask you, what's your contribution going to be? What problems are you going to solve? What discoveries will you make? What will a president who comes here in twenty or fifty or one hundred years say about what all of you did for this country?"

- President Barack Obama, Broadcasted Speech, September 8, 2009

Think about this excerpt from President Obama's speech. Imagine it is fifty years later and you are writing a letter to the president. In your letter, relay what contributions your generation has made in the past fifty years. Be sure to include contributions, discoveries, and/or solutions to long-standing problems in our country.

Your Local Government (pilot)

Learn about how your town's government is organized and who the town's leaders are. To show what you have learned, write a description of the local government by identifying the positions of power in the government, who holds those positions, and what their main duties and powers are. (Your town may have a Web site and other materials to help you obtain this information.)

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Your Role in an Ecosystem (pilot)

Define the terms producers, consumers, and decomposers as part of an ecosystem. Give examples of each. Identify your role in this system.

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