

Language Arts – Writing

Directions

Part 2

Time – 85 Minutes (Part 1 and Part 2)

25 Questions – Part 1

1 Essay Question – Part 2

This is a test of your writing skills. Your response will be scored based on:

- Development of a central position through explanation of supporting reasons, examples, and details from passages and personal experience
- Clear organization of ideas, including an introduction and conclusion, logical paragraphs, and effective transitions
- Language use, including varied word choice, varied sentence constructions, and appropriate voice
- Clarity and correctness of writing conventions

You will find two passages in which the authors put forth differing perspectives on an issue of importance. Read both passages carefully, noting the strengths and weaknesses of each discussion. Then, you will write an essay in which you explain your own opinion on the issue.

A high school advisor invited speakers to talk to students during the school's annual Career Day. The following speeches were given to the juniors and seniors.

A College Education: The Key to Success

¶1 Thinking about the next step in your life can be a challenge. You can either go to college or start work right away. But these days, there isn't really much choice. A college degree is not just important — it's a necessity.

¶2 First, many careers require a college degree. For example, you can't become a teacher, architect, or journalist without one. In fact, Georgetown University estimates that roughly 63% of all jobs will require some college education or degree by 2018. Furthermore, a 2013 government report states that only 3.7% of college graduates 25 and older were unemployed. But the unemployment rate for the same age group with only high school diplomas was 7.5%.

¶3 College graduates also earn more money than nongraduates. Data from 2013 show that people with a bachelor's degree earn an average of \$30,000 more a year than those with just a high school diploma. More income can lead to a more secure lifestyle and an increased ability to put your children through college. It can also lead to a more fulfilling retirement.

¶4 But earning a degree isn't just about making a living. It's also about happiness. I'm a college graduate, and I love my job as a magazine editor. In fact, a 2010 report by the College Board states that 58% of college-educated people felt very satisfied with their jobs. However, only 50% of those with just a high school diploma reported the same.

¶5 Yes, college takes time and money. But it's an investment in your future that will pay off in the long run. In fact, a survey conducted in 2011 found that 86% of college graduates believed the benefits of their education were worth the cost. Having a degree gives you more job security, financial independence, and personal satisfaction.

Learning a Trade: An Alternative Path to Success

¶1 A college degree is often presented as the best option after high school, but many college graduates find themselves in debt, out of work, and dependent on others. They may have to put off owning a car, buying a house, or saving for retirement. Instead, why not consider learning a trade? I'm a plumber, and I'm glad I'm not stuck in an office all day.

¶2 Trades, or middle-skill jobs, require some training in a specific skill, like real estate sales, personal training, and carpentry, but take less education than traditional bachelor's degrees. Learning to be a sheet metal worker may need just three months, while other trades, like electricians and healthcare aides, may require only one or two years of training.

¶3 Middle-skill jobs are crucial to society, but fewer people are doing them than in the past. As a result, our country now has a "skills gap," meaning there aren't enough people to perform this critical work. In 2011, a survey revealed that 67% of manufacturing companies had a serious shortage in skilled laborers, which increases the demand for trade workers. Furthermore, USA Today reported that almost 2.5 million new, middle-skill jobs will be added to the workforce by 2017. If that doesn't sound like job security, I don't know what does.

¶4 But what about money? First, government grants are available to help pay for the required training. In fact, the government dispensed \$2 billion over the last three years for trade education. Second, middle-skill jobs account for half of all jobs in the United States that pay middle-class wages, and some even pay more than jobs that require college degrees.

¶5 Four years of college isn't your only option. You may find that learning a trade is perfect for you. You could start earning more money, more quickly, and without incurring so much debt.

Write an essay in which you explain your own position on the issue of whether or not the time used in learning a trade for career development is as valuable as the time invested in a college degree.

Be sure to use evidence from the text passages provided as well as specific reasons and examples from your own experience and knowledge to support your position. Remember that every position exists within the context of a larger discussion of the issue, so your essay should, at minimum, acknowledge alternate and/or opposing ideas. When you have finished your essay, review your writing to check for correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

