

Assessing the United States

(Domestic Edition)

One of our goals this year is to work with you on improving your writing. We ask you, therefore, to look at this first assignment as a base-line control. Do not ask anyone for help, including family members, other students, tutors or even us. Starting with the second assignment, we will be encouraging you to come see us, early and often, in your writing process, but for this first assignment we want to see what you can do on your own.

To alleviate grade-induced pressure, we will create a “floor” for this assignment of 82%, meaning that a 41 out of 50 possible points is the lowest grade any assignment (assuming your work is submitted on time) will receive for the purposes of calculating the first quarter average. Some assignments may deserve lower than a 41/50, in which case we will put two grades on the assignment. The grade on the assignment will be the grade that we believe it deserves (27/50, for example), but the grade in our book will be translated to a 41/50.

Here is the question: **Has the contemporary United States lived up to its promises?**

In order to answer this question, you will need to consider the texts and images we looked at in our first class (they are included in the pdf version of this assignment, which you can view on Schoolwires).

Your answer should take the form of a concession/assertion essay of approximately 800 words.¹

Concession/assertion essay structure will be taught in the next few English classes. In short, concession/assertion structure is when an argument is made conceding the opposition’s stance before asserting the side the arguer believes in more. For a five paragraph essay, the first body paragraph would be the concession and the next two body paragraphs would be the assertion.

Your essay should include:

- An introductory paragraph that begins broadly and then narrows its focus, ending with a thesis statement that provides your answer to the question above.
- A concession paragraph acknowledging that the other answer to the question is not entirely without merit. This paragraph should make reference to specific events and ideas, both from the documents we discussed in class and from outside research and observations.
- Two body paragraphs that argue in favor of your thesis. These paragraphs should make reference to specific events and ideas, both from the documents we discussed in class and from outside research and observations, and explain why this evidence is more convincing than the evidence in the concession.

¹ When we use the phrase “approximately 800 words,” we are asking you to create an essay that is within ten percent of the word limit in either direction. Therefore, essays in the range of 720-880 words are entirely appropriate for this assignment. An essay of 719 or 881 words has veered out of the appropriate zone and will be penalized.

- A conclusion that begins narrowly and then broadens out to a larger consideration of social mobility and the US.

You should not use personal pronouns (“I,” “me,” “my,” etc.). This essay should be typed in Times New Roman font, size 12. It should be double spaced. There should be one-inch margins on all four sides of the paper.

You should read “Better Writing” on Maguire’s schoolwires homepage, so you have a sense of the kinds of issues we will be attending to when providing your work feedback.

Your essay should be submitted to Tom Maguire’s turnitin by 10:00 PM on Wednesday 11 September. (Note: the class ID is 6688606; the password is “maguire”) Tom will grade half of the essays; Mr. Mounkhal will grade the other half. On the next assignment your assignment will be graded by the other teacher. Both grades will count for both classes.

Rubric: Assessing You Assessing the United States

97...95...93...91...89...87...85...83...81...79...77...75...73...71...69...67...65

How well does the introduction introduce the broad topic?

Well

Somewhat well

Needs more attention

How well does the thesis provide an narrow focus and a specific structure for the body ¶s?

Well

Somewhat well

Needs more attention

How well does body ¶ **one** use specific evidence?

Well

Somewhat well

Needs more attention

How well does body ¶ **one** respond to the concession side of your thesis?

Well

Somewhat well

Needs more attention

How well does body ¶ **two** use specific evidence?

Well

Somewhat well

Needs more attention

How well does body ¶ **two** develop a persuasive argument?

Well

Somewhat well

Needs more attention

How well does body ¶ **three** use specific evidence?

Well

Somewhat well

Needs more attention

How well does body ¶ **three** develop a persuasive argument?

Well

Somewhat well

Needs more attention

How well does the conclusion tie the body paragraphs together?

Well

Somewhat well

Needs more attention

How well does the conclusion move out to a broader consideration of the topic?

Well

Somewhat well

Needs more attention

How well does the essay conform to standard rules of grammar, style, and usage?

Well

Somewhat well

Needs more attention

How well does the essay use citations and bibliography to provide source information?

Well

Somewhat well

Needs more attention

97...95...93...91...89...87...85...83...81...79...77...75...73...71...69...67...65