

## Student Writing Exemplars (Grades 3-12)

### Purpose of Exemplars

These student exemplars have been compiled to give teachers an example of a “5” level of achievement on a ThinkCERCA assignment. A “5” level of achievement demonstrates that the student has earned a 5 on all areas of the writing rubric. The exemplar represents what a student in each grade could achieve by the END of that grade.

Keep in mind the baseline of your students' writing and their progress overtime. All students develop writing skills at their own pace. Exemplars are useful in providing detailed guidance to support instructional planning, especially within norming and grading sessions teachers engage in within professional learning communities.

We recommend exemplars are examined in teaching teams or professional development. For support in introducing exemplars to your staff or fellow teachers, we've prepared this [slide deck](#).

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## Exemplar Grade 3

### Text

[Homework Questions](#)

### Writing Prompt

Should kids in elementary school have homework?

### Exemplar Student Essay

*Some teachers and parents argue that memorizing information for homework helps students develop important study habits and skills. Other teachers and parents believe that homework is useful when it makes sense and helps you learn. Kids in elementary school should not have homework because it is often just busy work. Busy work doesn't teach you anything, it just takes away time from something else you could do with your family. The author states that "learning should happen in the classroom and that family and free time after school are better for kids than schoolwork." Talking with friends or family after school helps kids listen and answer. Playing games after school helps kids think through choices that make them win. Students should not have homework because there are things kids can do after school that make them smarter.*

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## Exemplar Grade 4

### Text

[An Open Letter About Homework](#)

### Writing Prompt

Should schools assign homework?

### Exemplar Student Essay

*According to "An Open Letter About Homework," homework helps students by giving them a chance to build personal responsibility and practice important school subject skills. Schools should assign homework because it helps with academic knowledge and character traits that help people become more productive.*

*One reason schools should assign homework is that it helps students understand what they are learning. In "An Open Letter About Homework," the text says, "home assignments reinforce information and concepts." This means homework can help students that need more practice but also challenge students too. Another reason schools should assign homework is home assignments form habits that help people become successful. For example, the text states, "Most importantly, homework teaches independent learning, responsibility, and time management." People can accomplish their goals through behaviors created from organizing, completing, and turning in homework.*

*Schools should assign homework since it gives students possibilities to better understand their academic subjects and improve their working habits.*

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## Exemplar Grade 5

### Text

#### [Extending Learning Time?](#)

### Writing Prompt

Should regular classroom learning time for students be extended?

### Exemplar Student Essay

*Many schools in America are making the school day longer. Schools are doing this so students have more time to learn. It is also important for schools in America to be better than schools around the world. Schools need to improve, but classroom time should not be extended. Schools should be improved in other ways.*

*In the article, "Extending Learning Time," the writer Dennis Hamel says that students in Finland have higher test scores than students in America and they spend less time in school. This shows that more time in school does not lead to more success. First, when students spend more time in the classroom, they do not have as much time to join extracurricular activities like art and sports. These activities are important and help students grow in many ways. Students learn to cooperate with each other. Also, if the school day is longer, teachers will not have as much time to plan. So, classes might not be as well planned and work might not be graded well. Teachers will also not have as much time for their own learning. This means that students will not learn as much.*

*The article says that over 50% of students dropout of high school in some cities. It is important to make schooling better in America so that kids can be successful later in life, but time in school should not be extended. Instead, time in school should be better used, and teachers should be better trained.*

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## Exemplar Grade 6

### Text

[Yes to Uniforms: A Student's View](#)

### Writing Prompt

Do school uniforms improve student learning?

### Exemplar Student Essay

*Do you think uniforms improve students' learning? There has been a long debate on whether or not students should wear uniforms. My claim is uniforms do not improve student learning. Uniforms do not improve student learning because bullying will continue no matter what students wear, uniforms can be costly, and students cannot express themselves freely. As the author states in paragraph eight, wearing uniforms does not allow students to express themselves. Additionally, the text states that uniforms can be costly for low income families. Furthermore, school uniforms policies do not allow students to express themselves freely and be an individual. Uniforms are nothing more than a quick fix. Making students dress alike is superficial and it does not have any real connection to improving student learning.*

*Opponents may disagree, because in paragraph three it states that studies show uniforms can help increase students' learning by reducing suspensions and increasing test scores. However, students can learn with or without uniforms. In conclusion, uniforms do not help students learn because students can be smart and get good grades without school uniforms.*

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## Exemplar Grade 7

### Text

[Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier \(1988\) and the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution](#)

### Writing Prompt

Should school officials be allowed to censor students' writing in school newspapers?

### Exemplar Student Essay

*School officials should not be allowed to censor students' writing in school newspapers. I believe that school officials should not be allowed to censor students' writing because in paragraph 11 it states that, "the school newspaper in this case was not open to unlimited contribution of students, teachers, and other members of the community." There was no reason to censor especially if it was for educational purposes.*

*Some evidence that supports my claim is, "This court said that the school paper was a "public forum," or place where students could express their views". "Therefore, its primary function was for educational purposes, and the newspaper did not constitute a public forum". "There was another article that Principal Reynolds did not like. This one talked about divorce. In it, one student said things about her father. For example, she said that her father went out too much. She also said that her father didn't spend enough time with his family. The father did not get a chance to tell his side of the story. Principal Reynolds thought this was unfair."*

*My evidence connects back with my claim because it shows why school officials should not be able to censor students' writing in school newspapers. First of all the article said it was a primary function for educational purposes and it didn't constitute as a public forum, so therefore the newspaper was not open to the public and didn't have to be censored since it was for a grade. When the student talked about divorce, it was her choice to talk about it. Nobody gave a specific topic to write about. The father didn't need to say his side of the conversation; it was just an assignment she needed to complete.*

*Others might disagree with my claim because they might think that Principal Reynolds was correct, ninth graders shouldn't be reading about sex, birth control, pregnant teenagers, or divorce. Mothers and fathers might want to tell their kids themselves about those topics. Some people might also think that Principal Reynolds was right because they might think of the parents' perspective, thinking that parents should tell kids themselves about those sorts of things and those schools shouldn't introduce those kinds of things to their kids.*

*Therefore, I still believe in my claim and I won't change my mind, schools shouldn't censor students' writing in school newspapers. I believe this violates students 1st Amendment rights. It's their way of expressing their views and their way of expressing what's going on in life and other people's lives, if they wanted to write about something personal.*

## Exemplar Grade 8

### Text

[Disconnect: The Argument Over Cell Phones in Our Schools](#)

### Writing Prompt

Should teachers allow cell phone use in the classroom?

### Exemplar Student Essay

*I disagree that the benefits of allowing cell phones in schools outweigh the drawbacks. Cell phones in school stop kids from being focused on lessons, and they do not really pay attention to their teachers and classmates. Others might disagree with my claim and say that cellphones are used for schoolwork and to contact their parents when they are using other transportation.*

*A 2010 study found that 71 percent of students with cell phones had sent or received text messages during classroom time. The study also found that most students go on using their phones no matter what the school's policy happens to be. They were using cell phones to text answers to one another during class. That is cheating and does not prepare students for life. This evidence connects to my claim because it shows how the students are not focusing on school work and how they use cell phones to cheat some of the time.*

*When students have cell phones in class, they are not giving their full attention to the teacher or the lesson. Without a way to control this disrespectful behavior, cell phones should be banned in classrooms altogether. The text also states that schools should work harder to enforce this rule. Arguments between teachers and students over cellphone use can become dangerous. The news is filled with stories about teachers who confront students, wanting them to turn off their phones or to turn them in and they do not do as asked.*

*Cell phones just make it too easy and too tempting for adolescents to avoid doing the rigorous schoolwork that is essential to their success in the future. The biggest problem with having phones in school is the cheating that happens. There are countless times students were caught using their cellphones to cheat. Having your cellphone at school is not an essential part of your education.*

*I disagree that the benefits of allowing cell phones in schools outweigh the drawbacks. Mobile technologies give students access to the Internet and to games, music, and social media websites. This may cause them to be disrespectful, not pay attention in class, and to cheat. Allowing cellphones at school does not outweigh the drawbacks and that it is not helpful for students' education.*

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## Exemplar Grade 9

### Text

[Woman's Right to the Suffrage](#)

### Writing Prompt

Why does Anthony call a government that denies women the right to vote "the most hateful aristocracy ever established" in the world?

### Exemplar Student Essay

*Suzanne B. Anthony was right in her claim that our government was "the most hateful Aristocracy ever established" in the world. This is since these male 'aristocrats' are those who deny the women of their family, relatives, acquaintance and America in general. And to do this, to add to that, they must defy constitutional law of the entire land! And all this to deny all women of America the power to vote to uphold their 'aristocracy' a bit longer; whether it be religious, racial or sexist, (even nationalist! [i. e. anti-immigrant nationalism]) one could not say they haven't tried. This cruelty has gone unmatched as it denies the basic rights of citizens to half the population, including the so-called 'aristocrats' own family members! It is denying the constitution which constitutes the law of the [U. S.] land, and that in itself is done only to lower family members and all women in general to uplift the man in supposed superiority based on uplifting mental morale and the sense of greater and more dignified a role. Although some may claim the rights of State law, it cannot rightfully exist without abiding by General Law of the Constitutional Code of Conduct constituting, of course, the United States of America and all its other laws, in a foundational sense. All Laws must be in accordance with the Constitution. She claims that for slavery of an entire race, it [the Constitutional law] is not as horribly broken as the lowering from the rank of True Citizenship of approximately half, maybe more; of the entire population, and there is no man without a mother, so there is no excuse to declassify women by considering them unable to be classified as people for any reason; as men are people, women are; and as people entitled to vote are Citizens of America, and women are citizens, should they not have the rights of one? And thus, they are citizens and must be given their rights and the dehumanization of women must be ended; it is so terrible; (Yes! The sheer tyrannical concept of which is worthy of shaming the American government,) it is worthy of the title of the reason for the prevailing class who holds power (to themselves, holds power) to be called "the most hateful Aristocracy ever established" in the world.*

*If you are not yet convinced that Suzanne B. Anthony was right in her claim that our government was "the most hateful Aristocracy ever established" in the world, I shall proceed to elaborate; my first proof, as I have mentioned is that it is since these male 'aristocrats' are those who deny the woman of their family, relatives, acquaintance and America in general. They deny the rights of half a population of a country, that being their own, and thus treating them unworthily; they are worthy of an equal say to that of men, being 50 per cent of the population, and cannot be undermined. Suzanne B. Anthony states that "For any State to make a sex qualification*

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*that must ever result in the disenfranchisement of one entire half of the people is to pass a bill of attainder, or an post ex facto law, and is therefore a violation of the supreme law of the land." Not only is it (very) unethical, but illegal, making it more so a shameful blot in the pages of U. S. History, breaking the law in order to take the rights of half a population and burn them at stake in order to give males a greater say by twofold, and thus a greater sense of importance! For this reason, it is painfully clear for all U. S. citizens that their country has once beheld a tragedy that forever will mark a point of injustice for their country, which shows that even these proud citizens have once supported or been made to battle an injustice, if they were to claim their true rights of citizenship. This shows that Suzanne B. Anthony was right in her claim that our government was "the most hateful Aristocracy ever established" in the world.*

*To add to the above, my reason for the next statement I have made is that to do this, to add to that, they must defy constitutional law of the entire land! And all this to deny all women of America the power to vote to uphold their aristocracy a bit longer; whether it be religious, racial or sexist, (even nationalist! [i. e. anti-immigrant nationalism]) one could not say they haven't tried. This is exaggerated extremism and a male Anarchy, (For it is of such great importance to these irrational self-appointed and self-proclaimed Oligarchs to the point of breaking the Supreme law to support a Cruel and wicked supreme Goal that these men judge to be bigger than the Law, these men of the male Anarchy.) "The preamble of the Federal Constitution says: 'We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.'" Thus quoth Susan B. Anthony in demonstrating and proving the existence of the Constitutional right of women to vote. This clearly shows that the mere existence of the Constitution was to form a more perfect union by doing many things, among which; as we will primarily discuss, is to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves [the current peoples of the United States of America] and our posterity who could then dare to imagine the situation that we have today... that we had then? "By it [the male 'Anarchy' and its Components, including the Anarchists] the blessings of liberty are forever withheld from women and their female posterity." Who could fail to see the cruelty in this? Whoever does not must needs be an uneducated boor the likes of none.*

*In formal conclusion, Suzanne B. Anthony was right in her claim that our government was "the most hateful Aristocracy ever established" in the world. Since these male 'aristocrats' are those who deny all women. Additionally, to do this, they must defy the constitutional law. And all this is done simply to deny all women of America the power to vote to uphold their 'aristocracy'. (And their ego.) This cruelty has gone unmatched as it denies basic citizens' rights to half the population, including the 'aristocrats' families, relatives, coworkers and acquaintances that are not of the same sex. Hardly a crime, it is denying the constitution which constitutes U.S. law, and the law is broken only to lower family members and women in general to uplift men in their mental vision of themselves and the degree of their power. Though State laws' rights be claimed, they cannot rightfully exist without abiding by the Superior Constitutional Law, with which all [U. S.] Laws must be in accordance with. Suzanne B. Anthony claims that for slavery of an entire race it*

*is not as horrible as the lowering from the rank of Actual(ized) Citizenship of approximately half, maybe more; of the entire population, and those who retain the human right of citizenship (slaves hadn't been considered people, and their enslavers were given an extra half a vote for them; more so should the humane citizens' rights be given to those who are not denied their humanity) and as people entitled to vote are Citizens of America, and women are citizens, should they not have the rights of one? And thus, they are citizens and must be given their rights and the dehumanization of women must be ended; it is so terrible; it is worthy of the title of the reason for the prevailing class who holds power (to themselves, holds power) to be called "the most hateful Aristocracy ever established" in the world.*

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## Exemplar Grade 10

### Text

[How a Few Species Are Hacking Climate Change](#)

### Writing Prompt

What evidence does the author use to support the claim that some species are able to adapt to climate change?

### Exemplar Student Essay

*The climate is changing. These words are spoken in the classroom, during debates, and on the television quite frequently in the modern age. Oftentimes, only the effects climate change has on humans are discussed. There are many more organisms other than humans that will also be impacted. What does the rapidly warming climate mean for those species? Most species will be able to adapt to climate change because the author of "How a Few Species Are Hacking Climate Change" provides enough evidence to show that some species are rapidly altering their behaviors and traits through a combination of plastic adaptations and genetic evolution. Not all species will be able to survive the changing climate, but a majority of species will be able to continue onward with life.*

*One reason that many species will survive is how they can adapt their abilities to changing climates. This fact is illustrated in a test that showed corals exposed to heat for a long time or for only a single year greatly improved their heat tolerance. A test was conducted in which coral was put in warm water to see if it bleached, or released its algae. The text says, "Just 20 percent of the individual coral animals spit out their algae, whereas 55 percent of coral from an otherwise similar but much cooler pool spit out their algae during the test." When the corals that were originally from the cooler pools were allowed to sit in warmer water for a year, however, the percentage of bleached coral in the same test dropped from 55% to 32.5%. The dramatic drop showed just how much adaptations can occur in a single year. This experiment shows that some species are adapting to warmer climates naturally. It also shows the fact that a single year of heat exposure can greatly improve heat tolerance. If heat tolerance in corals can rise quickly, other species may be able to do the same. These adaptations are happening quicker than originally thought.*

*Another point that supports the idea that most species will survive is the observing of a species of endangered butterfly. The quino checkerspot butterfly has shifted its range to higher altitudes on mountains. The higher the altitude of the mountain, the cooler the temperature is. Just as the corals showed some species are rapidly adapting their tolerance, some species are simply outsmarting the warming altogether. In fact, many other species are doing the same thing. A study on moving species found that the median shift to higher altitudes was 36 feet per decade and species were moving closer to the poles by over 10 miles per decade. The author states about the butterflies, "Furthermore, it had somehow learned to lay its eggs on a new host plant." This shows that the butterflies were able to make an extreme change in a short amount of time. The butterflies were not slowly able to lay their eggs on plants higher up the mountain. Instead, they were able to change their host plant to one exposed to cooler temperatures in a matter of*

years. Camille Parmesan said to the Guardian, "Every butterfly biologist who knew anything about the quino in the mid-1990s thought it would be extinct by now, including me." This shows that the adaptive capabilities of organisms is proving to be higher than what many scientists expected.

The tested corals went through individual adaptations, and the butterflies went to cooler environments to avoid the situation. There is another way for species to combat climate change, however. That is through natural selection and evolution. European larger banded snails are an excellent example. Snails with light colored shells have been shown to have a lower body temperature than snails whose shells are dark. The author informs the reader that, "...light colored shells are becoming more prevalent over time in the Netherlands, even in wooded, shady environments where you might expect dark shells to dominate." This statement shows a number of things. It shows that evolution is happening in response to Earth's warming and it shows that it is happening extremely fastly. In addition, the fact that the light colored shells are becoming more common even in the cooler environments, shows the snails are being proactive. The species itself is starting to mainly show traits that keep it cool so when it gets even warmer, it will be prepared. Salmon in Alaska have also started migrating away from their home water earlier in the year. Recent evidence shows this change is a genetic change. The author points out that the snails have been studied for 45 years and the salmon for 32 years. These time frames are not immensely large so it is difficult to observe true evolution. Despite this, evolution has been seen occurring in both instances. Just because the Earth is heating up rapidly, it doesn't mean species can't evolve rapidly with their planet.

Most species will survive because climate change is going too fast for some to keep up. The author says, "...long-lived species with low genetic variability -including many rare mammals- will have less adaptive ability." Because some species don't begin reproducing for decades, not all species will be able to go through natural selection fast enough to keep up with the changing climate. In addition, some species near the tropics have been exposed to little variability in their climate, so they may experience a tougher time adapting to tolerate the heat. At this point, scientists don't know what will happen to some species. Because mankind has never witnessed a climate changing as quickly as the present one is, it is difficult for experts to speculate. Despite this, the recent evidence the author shared points toward species' adaptive capabilities being able to defeat the changing environments.

An objector may state that the author of "How a Few Species Are Hacking Climate Change" does not provide enough evidence to show that most species will be able to adapt to climate change. Some reasons for this counterargument may be that the author fails to provide large numbers of species' adapting. The article points out that only twenty studies have directly linked genetic evolution to climate change, and about the same amount have linked phenotypic plasticity to climate change. However, climate change has only been recognized as a major threat for a short amount of time relative to human existence. Evolution normally takes a little while to occur so one cannot expect to see boatloads of evidence all at once. Another point an objector may bring to attention is that climate change is happening way too fast for species to escape the blight it will bring. Again, one cannot confidently make this statement because scientists have never seen a climate change as quickly as it is now. The resilience of species to survive to the modern age and sprout into so many different life forms should display how stubborn life is. Species will not go down without a fight against climate change. A point brought up earlier also

*illustrates that some species can adapt extremely quickly. If corals can greatly change their heat tolerance for the better in 365 days, other species will be able to keep up with climate change.*

*Temperatures will continue to go up as long as the present situation is not altered. While mankind will be impacted, there are many other plants and animals that will have to face the rising temperatures. A majority of these species will be able to survive, however. The species in danger can move to higher altitudes, move towards the poles, adapt as individuals, or go through natural selection and evolution as a species. With all of these things going for a majority of species, and new studies showing adaptive and genetic changes are happening very fast, climate change is simply another obstacle that most life will overcome.*

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## Exemplar Grade 11

### Text

#### [Do Students Still Have Free Speech in School?](#)

### Writing Prompt

Should students' online comments be subject to disciplinary action from schools?

### Exemplar Student Essay

*Whether or not schools have the right to punish students for things they have done on social media has been a controversial subject for quite some time. Schools have always been known to limit students' rights while at school. However, the digital age now brings a new problem to the table. Students across the U.S. have been punished for things they have commented or posted on the internet, but some people are fighting these punishments. While schools should regulate and punish cyberbullying, they should not be able to punish and/or harass students for posts or comments that they made in their own free time, because it limits the students creative expression, violates students freedom of speech and gives the school more authority than necessary which violates the students' private lives.*

*Schools regulating students social media gives the student little room to express themselves in an age that is mainly digital. The schools should not have authority over what their students are doing in their free time after school hours, so long as they are off school property and not bullying or doing anything illegal. As Mary Beth Tinker said "If we don't encourage young people to use their First Amendment rights, our society is deprived of their creativity, energy, and new ideas. This is a huge loss and also a human rights abuse." (Wheeler, 3) By restricting students of their freedom of expression schools are obstructing students of their creative thoughts. How schools treat their students will directly affect how those students act as adults, and what kind of generation will be running our country in a decade or two. If students are raised in an environment where their ideas are suppressed and they are punished for speaking out against authority, then they will grow up lacking creativity, new ideas and will be afraid to speak up for themselves. This does not create good adults to govern the nation. This country was built on the backs of people who explored, invented and most importantly, who spoke out for what they believed in and opposed authority that violated their rights as individuals or freedom to express themselves. Limiting students freedom of expression will have a negative impact on how they act in the future.*

*Another problem with schools punishing students for things said off campus, is that they are violating students freedom of speech. Regulating what a student can say outside of school, is a direct violation of the First Amendment. The recent punishment of many students for apparently "unacceptable" social media posts or comments has many students worried that their rights to freedom of speech are under attack. This attack of students freedom of speech has been shown in many cases across the U.S. In January of 2014, a student at Rogers High School in Minnesota named Reid Sagehorn, jokingly responded to a tweet asking about whether he had ever made out with a teacher, saying "actually yeah" to which the school suspended him for seven weeks. Sagehorn fought the suspension saying the school officials violated his rights to freedom of*

speech, and it turns out he was right. "In August 2015, a federal judge rejected the school officials' motion to have the case dismissed. After all, the court found that Sagehorn made the post while away from campus, during nonschool hours, without using the school's computers. And last month Sagehorn collected a settlement of more than US\$400,000." (Calvert, 3) Sadly this is not the only time that schools have wrongfully punished a student for exercising their rights to freedom of speech. "In September 2014, a federal court in New York considered a case called *Bradford v Norwich City School District* in which a public high school student was suspended based on a text-message conversation he had with another student regarding a third student while outside of school." This is not only unfair, but a blatant violation of the students freedom of speech, which includes offensive speech. Not only were the students off campus but they were just having a conversation. This was over text message, they were not posting or commenting on a social media platform, nor were they using it to bully a student. While the content of the messages may have been offensive, that does not give the school the right to punish the students for a simple conversation they had off campus. Schools are overstepping their bounds when it comes to regulating students right to freedom of speech outside of the classroom.

Schools are also invading students privacy by punishing them for things they said or posted at home. Schools should not be able to punish a student for what they do outside of school. While schools are expected to deal with cyberbullying, that does not mean they should be able to infringe on their students private lives. Lee Rowland, an ACLU staff attorney said "We cannot allow the hard fought battles for student speech rights to be eroded in the digital age. School officials aren't permitted to listen in on chatter at students' private gatherings with friends, or rifle through their private videos and photo albums. Nor should we permit them to do so simply because those conversations or images are digital." (Wheeler, 7) However this did not stop the Illinois General Assembly from passing a law "that allows public school districts to demand access to students' personal social media accounts if the student is suspected of violating school rules." (Chen, 3) Schools should not be allowed to encroach upon students private lives simply because they are now digitized as well. Social media should be treated just the same as any other conversation or gathering. And while bullying should be regulated the school should not have the authority to invade a students privacy, just as they would not have the right to invade someones' home. It is a safe space where a student can express him or herself freely. As Frank LoMonte, the director of the Student Press Law Center said, " You can't equate online speech created on personal time with in-class speech, and it's dangerous to try. Schools are so prone to censor and intimidate whistleblowers who complain about conditions on school time. Students absolutely must have some safe space where they can complain when schools are dirty, dangerous, or overcrowded, without fear that the long arm of school discipline will reach out and grab them." (Wheeler, 10) Students need to have someplace to voice their opinions and ideas on issues, and for this generation that place is social media. Schools should not be allowed to violate that safe space unless the things being said or posted are very obviously bullying. Free speech is allowed to be offensive, this is how people are allowed to mock the president or how the KKK is allowed to march down the street during a parade. People are entitled to their opinions and views, and these are protected under the First Amendment. Why is it that schools are now allowed to violate that just because the people doing it are students, instead of adults? Schools should not be allowed

*to infringe upon students' rights to privacy or freedom of speech when they are outside of school just because they don't deem it to be appropriate.*

*On the other hand, schools are expected to deal with issues such as cyberbullying that involve the schools' students. Schools do in fact have the power to discipline students, within reason, for cyberbullying. In the Davis v Monroe County Board of Education, it was stated that "If a school knows about harassment or other hurtful actions against students and doesn't respond effectively to prevent it from continuing, it may be held responsible." (Cyberbullying Research Center, 4) This shows that schools are in fact held responsible to stop cyberbullying. They can also "discipline students for their off-campus electronic speech..." provided that it is a "threat against faculty and other students." (Cyberbullying Research Center, 5) as seen in the case J.S. v Bethlehem Area School District. This means schools are allowed to discipline students for off-campus cyberbullying, however, "in the landmark Tinker case, the Supreme Court specifically warned schools that they could not forbid student expression simply because they wanted to avoid controversy. In order for [a school] to justify prohibition of a particular expression of opinion, it must be able to show that it's action was caused by something more than a mere desire to avoid the discomfort and unpleasantness that always accompany an unpopular viewpoint." (Wheeler, 12) While schools can and should be able to stop cyberbullying, prohibiting a student's freedom of speech just because of an offensive post or comment is not okay. Students do have a right to speak freely outside of school so long as they are not attacking or bullying another student. Infringing on a student's rights because of an unpopular opinion or offensive post is not justified.*

*Schools should not be able to infringe upon a student's creative expression, or privacy, or violate a student's freedom of speech by punishing them for things they did off campus. Schools also should not be able to punish students for offensive or unpopular views that they have shared with others on the internet or social media. However the school does have a right to discipline students within reason for bullying whether it be in school or online. But this does not change the fact that schools have been overstepping their bounds when it comes to regulating what students post on their personal social media accounts.*

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## Exemplar Grade 12

### Text

["Mississippi Burning" Murders Resonate 50 Years Later](#)

### Writing Prompt

How did the murder of Andy Goodman impact the chain of events of the civil rights movement?

### Exemplar Student Essay

*The year of 1964 was a very progressive year for the Civil Rights Movement. Especially for the state of Mississippi where Andy Goodman along with James Chaney and Michael Schwerner were volunteering to register African Americans to vote. However, because of the racial tension surrounding the Civil Rights Movement and black rights at the time, the Ku Klux Klan (a violent white supremacy group) killed these three men on June 21st, 1964. Although the murders were a very tragic event, there were many good events and outcomes from the Civil Rights Movement that came as a result of the Andy Goodman murder. The murder of Andy Goodman impacted the chain of events of the Civil Rights Movement because it led to more media coverage and investigative journalism on race related crimes, it led to social justice for blacks, and it helped to pave the way for blacks political and voting rights.*

*The murder of Andy Goodman impacted the Civil Rights Movement and led to an increase of media coverage and investigative journalism on race related crimes because the murder drew national attention and brought attention to previous racially motivated cases. This increase of media coverage in the Goodman case that drew national attention can be seen in Stephen Smith's article called "Mississippi Burning" Murders Resonate 50 Years Later where he states that, there were many African-Americans that were thought to be dead or had been missing with "...little media attention in Mississippi during that time". But, "...the murders of Goodman, Schwerner and Chaney rocked the nation." This statement by Smith is trying to prove that only after the murder of Andy Goodman (who was white) was the nation rocked and awakened to the racist crimes being committed in Mississippi and the south. Furthermore, Smith is trying to shed light on how the media was not covering race related deaths or hate crimes. But, when the murder of Goodman occurred, it helped to increase media coverage surrounding race issues within Mississippi and issues the Civil Rights Movement was fighting for; equality for blacks. But, this is not the only coverage brought to life because of the Goodman murder. Within Smith's article he also talks about how an investigative reporter at the Clarion-Ledger in Jackson named Jerry Mitchell brought more coverage to the racially motivated attacks and claimed that, "...reporting also helped secure convictions in other high-profile civil rights era cases...he obtained leaked files from the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission, a segregationist group that tried to curb growing civil rights activism." According to Smith's article, after the death of Andy Goodman, there was an increase in investigative journalism and, that this increase of investigative journalism impacted the Civil Rights Movement heavily. This peak in curiosity about racially motivated attacks made an impact against those who did not support the Civil Rights Movement and in race related cases. This being as people like Mitchell were now more involved and ready to fight*

against segregationist groups and expose the truth about race related cases in the south which, helped the Civil Rights Movement.

Another reason why the murder of Andy Goodman impacted the Civil Rights Movement was because it brought forward social justice for black rights at the time. Within the article, Smith claims that the murder of Andy Goodman brought about social justice and explains that, "It took two white kids to legitimize the tragedy of being murdered..." Especially, because they were murdered fighting for black rights. What Smith is trying to convey here is that because Goodman and one of the other boys killed were white and killed while advocating for black rights, their murders made a huge impact on social justice for blacks. Furthermore, their murders helped to push more people to support the Civil Rights Movement and their goal of black and white equality in society. Plus, the Goodman murder helped people to realize that race related issues and deaths were real and that some social reform needed to be done. However, not everyone thought there was real social justice in the Goodman case itself. In his article, Smith was aware of how long it actually took for some justice to be brought forward when he conveys that, "In 1964, the Justice Department... knew they were up against segregationist authorities... as well as all-white juries..." And, that the preacher who planned the killings (Edgar Ray Killen) was able to walk out a free man for 41 years to until he was found guilty of manslaughter in 2005. At this point in the article Smith makes a good point about how the federal justice departments were going up against a bias and racist group of individuals who did not support black justice or rights. Plus, how the justice for Goodman himself took a long time to be served. However, what Smith failed to realize is that although the Goodman case may not have been served justice right away, the Civil Rights Movement was able to achieve many levels of rights and social justice for African-Americans because of the Goodman case's publicity.

Finally, the murder of Andy Goodman impacted the chain of events of the Civil Rights Movement politically because it advocated for black voting rights such as the Voting Rights Act and helped to provide more blacks with the chance to be in office. While reading Smith's article he proceeds to talk about black voting rights within the Civil Rights Movement and clarifies that, "The three young men had been volunteering for a "Freedom Summer" campaign to register African-American voters. Their efforts helped pave the way for the passage of the landmark Voting Rights Act in 1965..." This point made by Smith is trying to clarify how important the work of Goodman and his fellow volunteers was within the Freedom Summer because it helped to influence the approval of black voting rights during the Civil Rights Movement. Furthermore, the murder of two white men and a black man who were advocating for black voting rights stood out and not only helped the Civil Rights Movement but, it helped to pass legislation such as the Voting Rights Act of 1965. However, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was not the only impact the Goodman murder had on the Civil Rights Movement and black voting rights. Another reason why Smith claims that the Goodman case politically helped the Civil Rights Movement and blacks can be best understood when he depicts that, "While it was a struggle for African-Americans to vote in 1964, Mississippi now has more elected black officials than any other state in the country." This point by Smith is great at depicting how not only the state of Mississippi had changed because of the Goodman murder but, how far they had improved since the murder in political and voting terms. According to Smith, there are more black officials in Mississippi than ever before and this

*is because of the influence on black voting rights that the Goodman trial had in the state of Mississippi and the Civil Rights Movement back in the 1960's.*

*Overall, the murder of Andy Goodman had an impact on the chain of events of the Civil Rights Movement because it led to more media attention and investigative journalism, it led to social justice for African-American rights, and impacted black voting and political rights. This being as the murder of Andy Goodman intrigued more reporters to investigate and cover the racial tensions within Mississippi and the south. And, the Goodman murder helped to pave the way for African-American social justice and brought justice forward for race-related crimes and murders. And finally, the Goodman murder helped to secure voting and political rights during the Civil Rights Movement and allowed for more blacks to be in office within the state of Mississippi than any other state.*