2011 Q3 LANG Mentor Text

**Prompt:** The following passage is from Rights of Man, a book written by the pamphleteer Thomas Paine in 1791. Born in England, Paine was an intellectual, a revolutionary, and a supporter of American independence from England. Read the passage carefully. Then write an essay that examines the extent to which Paine’s characterization of America holds true today. Use appropriate evidence to support your argument.

If there is a country in the world, where concord, according to common calculation, would be least expected, it is America. Made up, as it is, of people from different nations, accustomed to different forms and habits of government, speaking different languages, and more different in their modes of worship, it would appear that the union of such a people was impracticable; but by the simple operation of constructing government on the principles of society and the rights of man, every difficulty retires, and all the parts are brought into cordial unison. There, the poor are not oppressed, the rich are not privileged. . . . Their taxes are few, because their government is just; and as there is nothing to render them wretched, there is nothing to engender riots and tumults.

Read the overview, each sample essay, and commentary. Annotate AND take notes on:

1. The purpose of the question
2. Specific moves of each author and explain what was and was not successful
3. What you learned NOT to do
4. What you learned to do
5. Any other reflection you may have

\*\*The first question you should ask yourself is: Did you correctly interpret the prompt?

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| **Overview**  This question examined students’ ability to write an effective, compelling argument based on a prompt, drawing on evidence from their own experiences, observations, and reading to support their central claim or thesis. In particular, students were presented with an excerpt from Thomas Paine’s 1791 book, Rights of Man, in which Paine argues that, despite the diversity of its population, the United States is a nation in which “all the parts are brought into cordial unison.” The question directed students to “write an essay that examines the extent to which Paine’s characterization of America holds true today.”  **Score 9**  Throughout American history there have been many themes as to the make up of this diverse nation. One of the most popular refers to America as the “great melting pot,” suggesting that America is a place where all kinds of different cultures and beliefs combine to form a uniquely American identity. Thomas Paine here, however, seems to be more in accord with the “tomato soup” analogy where it states that the essence of American culture is the tomato soup that is, the socalled “American Creed,” a combination of liberty, self-government, social mobility, and economic independence, while other cultures add ingredients and spices to the soup , but does not change its nature as being a pot of tomato soup. Paine suggests that despite the diversity of American population, “the simple operation of constructing government on the principals of society and the nights of man” brings “cordial unison” and serves as the basis of American society as the tomato taste is the basis of the soup. I believe that although his assertion of diversity and the importance of rights of man seems to hold true today, that they continue to bring unison is no longer accurate.  There is little doubt that America even today is largely an immigrant society. Ever since Lyndon Johnson loosened the quota system in 1965, every year thousands, if not millions of people from all backgrounds pour into America, recently Asians and Latin Americans in predominance. However, while in the 1700s and 1800s the immigrants also came from different nations they often shared similar cultures as most were from the European continent, the integration of Asians and Latin Americans into a predominantly white society presents unprecedented difficulties Community-first values held by many Asians contradict the value of personal liberty in America and most Mexicans remain loyal to their homeland, never becoming part of American society. In these cases “the principles of society and the rights of man” no longer serve as a binding tone in uniting the American people; because of different cultures, these beliefs are no longer shared.  Another crucial issue in present-day America that threatens to tear the unison Paine so optimistically predicts is the ever radical political parties. Although both parties believe in what Paine calls “the principles of society and the rights of man,” this common belief fails to unite them for they see distinctively different ways of achieving them. The recent budget standoff presents a clear example of discord, not concord, caused by our form of government – when the President and the Congress fail to agree, serious problems might occur. The arguments surrounding what the government can and should do elude Paine’s characterization of America. These arguments are, however, not entirely detrimental to the American society. What Paine fails to recognize is that discord can sometimes be beneficial. When people possess the right to differ, when oppositional forces such as political parties fight to gain approval of the American people. We see possibilities of change – something only discord can initiate.  **Commentary Score: 9**  Beginning with an introductory paragraph that demonstrates a consistent sophistication of style, this essay effectively examines the extent to which Paine’s characterization of America is true today. The student uses a seamless blend of evidence and commentary throughout to build a convincing argument. For example, the student contends that “[e]ver since Lyndon Johnson loosened the quota system in 1965, every year thousands, if not millions of people from all backgrounds pour into America,” but these newer immigrants never fully adopted American values, so Paine’s “… ‘principles of society and the rights of man’ no longer serve … in uniting the American people.” In another example, the student plays with Paine’s use of the word “concord,” illustrating the country’s “discord” by citing “[t]he recent budget standoff.” Each example provided is thoroughly developed, and the essay’s control of its language, organization, and thinking is especially impressive. For example, “the ‘tomato soup’ analogy” works well to start building the student’s argument. The essay is stronger than those that received a score of 8 because of its impressive control of language (despite a few lapses here and there) and its exceptionally cohesive argument.  **Score 5**  Thomas Paine has educated and well creditable man. In 1791 he wrote the Rights of Man, discussing who the infant nation of America is so unique. It is comprised of some much different backgrounds yet it works in good harmony. It is also described to be a land were [sic] everybody is equal, given many oppurtunity [sic] . two-hundred [sic] and twenty years later, Paine’s belief still holds true even though there are greater distinctions in America.  Living in such a great city such as New York City, it is easy to say that Paine’s belief still holds true. With a population of over 8 million, there are people from all over the world adhering to all kinds of faiths. Even though there are so many different distinctions we still operate the greatest city in the world. On a personal level, I live in a mixed part of Brooklyn. There are no majorities but a great deal of minorities. Coming from a arab [sic] Muslim background. I am socially connected with Spanish [sic], whites, blacks and asians [sic] adhering to different religions. There are rarely situations in which who or where we come from plays a factor in NYC, people share their similarities and express their difference.  Oppurtunities [sic] are given to everybody, no matter how rich or poor you are Paine is still is still correct when he says “The poor are not oppressed and the rich are not privileged” A perfect example is the transition from high school to college. Poor people have to same oppurtunity [sic] to enter a prestigious college as do rich people have. A system of finicial [sic] aid and scholarships are awarded and can be taken advantage of by the less fortunate people. This shows that no matter what economic background and came from you still have an equal oppurtunity [sic] to gaining your success.  On a political view, Paine is once again correct. He mentioned the different forms and habits of government that America is accustomed to. Today we see political leaders with all different policies. There are so many political distinctions such such [sic] as Republicans, Democrats, Greens, Independents and so on. Even though there are so many distinctions we still get together and make resolution and laws to help make America a better place.  As the distinctions grew over the 220 years the Paine wrote this, his belief still holds true. In America it doesn’t matter about your background becauses [sic] everybody is entitled to an equal oppurtunity [sic] and there is “nothing to engender riots and tumults.”  **Commentary Score: 5**  This essay begins with an awkward opening paragraph, presenting the argument that “Paine’s belief still holds true even though there are greater distinctions in America.” The essay improves with the examples in paragraph 2, which are adequate: the student cites personal background, contrasting it to the backgrounds of others, to illustrate that “people share their similarities and express their differences.” However, the next paragraph’s evidence is limited. Here the student makes the claim that “[p]oor people have to [sic] same oppurtunity [sic] to enter a prestigous [sic] college as do rich people have” and then supports this claim with the brief evidence of “[a] system of finincial [sic] aid and scholarships.” The following paragraph, regarding political parties, is unconvincing with its brief discussion of “political distinctions.” Overall, the essay is uneven and contains a number of lapses in diction and syntax, although the prose usually conveys the student’s ideas. | **Notes** |

**What are the defining characteristic of a high scoring essay? Medium? What is your goal based off this analysis?**