

English 12

Mr. Monsen

Writing a Social Commentary

Directions: Complete steps 1-13 in order in your notebook.

Step 1: Brainstorm ideas by answering the following questions.

Responses for #3 and #4 should be at least a half of a written page in your notebook.

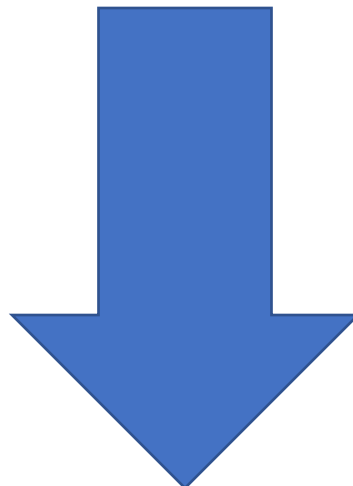
#1 – List ten things in our society that really annoy you

#2 – Now rank the top three issues out of all the ones you just wrote down as #1, #2, and #3

#3 – Now write about the #3 issue on your list. Explain why it bothers you, or why you think it is a problem worth talking about and what you think is a solution to the problem

#4 - Now write about the #1 issue on your list. Explain why it bothers you, or why you think it is a problem worth talking about and what you think is a solution to the problem

Step 2: Read both sample Social Commentaries below:



You're Not Special

By: Maggie Swiderski

You are not entitled to anything.

Well, not exactly. By law you are entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. However, having a sense of entitlement brainwashes you into believing you're superior to other people (newsflash! You're not). This narcissistic mindset that the universe revolves around oneself should be ridiculed, and not sought after. After all, possessing such an egocentric attitude typically drives people away, anyways.

While accommodating someone with a favor, or simply doing a good deed, there should only be one intention- to ultimately make someone happy, and feel content with yourself. Some though, may have ulterior motives, like only providing for someone merely to expect something in return. This goes both ways, though. If someone does a kind gesture without being forced, or having to comply, don't act like they owe you something. Be grateful for the kindness in others because today, modern society takes others' kind acts for granted.

On another spectrum, people shouldn't believe that they deserve any more than the next. Having a degree does not entitle you to a job. Having money does not entitle you to being rude. Being smart does not entitle you to bragging rights. Playing the game does not entitle you to a trophy. Using personal experience and traits that define you, shouldn't automatically allow you to boost your ego by stomping on others. Feeling superior to someone else because of your own accomplishments and bashing them for it is not the way to go. Accumulating confidence should be a personal journey, gained through random acts of kindness and personal victories- not insulting or bashing on others as a self-absorbed way to put oneself on a pedestal.

As an independent individual, it is vital that you work hard for what you want. If you want something, do it. Do not have the mindset that something is going to be handed down to you on a silver platter because *you want it*. Just "wanting" something is not a good enough excuse to be entitled to that something. If just "wanting" something was a good enough reason to get that something, there wouldn't be scientists, doctors, astronauts, or any other high-skilled professionals. People with these professions worked hard to get to where they are. Their degree was not handed to them. Work for what you want, and don't expect it to just be handed to you without effort.

If this self-absorbed, entitled society we live in continues, consequences will result. Nobody will work for anything, nobody will try to succeed, and nobody will be able to live on their own. The intelligence level in the futuristic society will be significantly less than today, and the level of disrespect coming from others will increase. By teaching children from a young age that they won't always get what they want, we can start to solve this issue. Having young adults and teens solve their own problems will help as well- for their parents aren't going to be there forever for them. People need to learn respect, and how to treat others.

Word Count: 518

Quietude

By John Doe

My name is John Doe, and I have no friends.

In truth, that's not true, but in modern society, having anything less than a thousand friends is downright sacrilegious. It seems everyone simultaneously heralds and decries the breaking down of social barriers nowadays, allowing people around the world to interact in ways that were unheard of in years past, even in the fantastical stories of the future (come to think of it, the futures described in those stories are often strictly dystopian; tyrannical governments and shattered ecosystems aren't exactly great conversation starters). Yet like a persistent ulcer in the stomach of progress, we few who cherish our solitude are increasingly branded "shut-ins" or other derogatory monikers meant to mock us (such ridicule seems rather counter-intuitive).

While there are certainly people who spend all of their time indoors shunning their fellow man, introverts such as myself only spend *some* of their time doing that. We are considered a strange lot; we may as well be living in the swamps of Dagobah. Additionally, we are not the best conversationalists, sometimes by choice. I personally find small talk banal and prefer conversations about topics I am genuinely interested in, not topics like sports, the weather, or politics. Many are baffled by my taciturn demeanor, despite the fact that there is no grand mystery to be solved; I simply don't have many interesting things to say. Other people are (mostly) great, truly they are, but after a certain point they're just plain insufferable.

The increasing ridicule of hermits is due, in large part, to the emergence of social media over the past decade. These sites allow—nay, they *encourage*—anybody with an internet connection to contribute to the torrential downpour of mind-numbing fecal matter. Anyone without an account on one of these networks is regarded as some sort of bizarre creature that has never seen the light of day. I find that I interact with my fellow man in the real world often enough for my tastes; I don't need to hear some regurgitated inspirational quote, I don't need to read the funny (or should I say "funny") tweet *somebody else* posted, and I certainly don't need to see your half-eaten breakfast.

Everyone but the most coldhearted individuals enjoys spending time with others, understandably so; it's a basic human need. I like to loudly enjoy myself with my friends as much as the next person (perhaps not *as* much), yet I do not blindly pursue companionship in every facet of my life. I'm quite content with burying my nose in a book, immersing myself in a videogame, or going to the movies alone. When it strikes my fancy, I'll happily partake in these or other activities with friends, but it's not always necessary for me to enjoy myself. Other people, however, search for any excuse just to interact with other humans. They'll sit in a parking lot for hours at a time doing nothing! They'll go to wild parties to gyrate their hips and get totally wasted, man! Then there's my personal favorite—they'll go to Applebee's weekly "Half-Apps" promotion to...eat half-priced appetizers. Woo! Nothing says "fun" like eating food that wasn't good enough to be the main course!

I realize I may have come across as condescending or overly caustic—fitting, since that was my intent. My goal was to convey the message to the whole world (or, more realistically, whoever had the displeasure of reading this) that people who do not rabidly crave human interaction should not be ridiculed for it. There is much enjoyment to be had when others are not around, a joy that fewer and fewer people are experiencing. Since nothing seems to stay in the public's consciousness for very long without a catchy slogan, I leave you with this bit of wisdom, dear reader:

Be yourself, by yourself.

Word Count: 644

Step 3: Read the “Social Commentary Definition” and “Assignment Requirements” below:

Social Commentary Definition

Social commentary is the act of providing **commentary** on an issue in society. This is often done with the idea of promoting change by informing people about a given problem and appealing to their sense of justice.

Assignment Requirements

- Between 400-600 words in length
- Uses personal experience and observation to illustrate the commentary in the body of the essay
- Is focused, but creative
- Makes people think about the topic
- Is typed single-spaced, 12 font, title bolded and centered with your name below the title and nothing else as a heading
- Typed Final Copy is Due by Deadline on the Calendar

Step 4: Decide on your topic for your commentary and **then answer the questions** below about your topic in your notebook:

Topic: (For Example, your topic might be – Rude People)

Answer as many of these questions about your topic as you can:

- 1) What are the causes of the problem?
- 2) What are the short term and long term effects of the problem?
- 3) How might this problem get worse over time (if no solution is found)?
- 4) What action would best address the problem?
- 5) What might stand in the way of this action?
- 6) Has this solution been tried before? What were the outcomes?
- 7) How might my reader be involved in this issue?
- 8) What personal experience do I have with this issue?
- 9) Who should care about this issue? Why?
- 10) Is this issue an example of some broader trend in society?
- 11) Why is it important that others hear my opinion about this issue?

Step 5: Copy the Outline for a commentary below into your notebook:

Social Commentary Outline

I. Introduction

- Start with an effective lead to catch the reader's attention

II. Body Paragraph #1

- Define/explain the problem/situation

III. Body Paragraph #2 through 4

- Give some specific examples of the situation/problem

IV. Body Paragraph #5

- Propose a solution to the problem

V. Conclusion

- Wrap it up in a memorable, but simple way

Step 6: Copy the “Author’s Purpose Notes” and complete the “Author’s Purpose Practice” below into your notebook. Be sure to check your answer using the Answer Key.

Author’s Purpose Notes

Many authors write to **entertain** people and make them laugh. Authors also write to **persuade** or convince their readers to believe in something. Sometimes authors write to **inform** or teach you about something.

The Social Commentary should entertain, persuade, and inform the audience all at once.

Author’s Purpose Practice

Read each short selection. Determine what the author’s purpose for writing the story may be.

(entertain, persuade, inform)

1.

When Angela went to Hawaii, she learned many things about tide pools. She found out that the ocean waves wash many shell-covered animals, such as crabs and mussels, into the tide pools. Often she saw mussels that had spun silky threads to help them hold onto a rock. Angela learned that the little animals use the shells as protections from enemies and to keep their bodies from drying out in the sun.

2.

Greg was sitting on his back porch, looking out at the ocean, when he saw something moving toward him from the beach. “Mom, come and look!” he called. “It’s a baby sea lion!”

Sure enough, the little animal came right up to the porch. Greg could see that its flipper was hurt. Greg fed it a fish while his mother called the vet. Soon the doctor and his helper came to take the sea lion to the animal hospital where they could take care of its hurt flipper.

Greg waved good-bye to his new friend. “We’ll come and visit you at the hospital as soon as you’re feeling better,” he promised.

3.

Every year millions and millions of American people will die of a disease they could have prevented. Do you know what disease I’m speaking of? Heart disease is the number one killer in America today. How can you make sure you don’t get this terrible deadly killer?

If you never smoke you will be 40% more likely to not have heart disease. Smoking is the number one reason many people get heart disease, heart attacks, as well as numerous types of cancers. Smoking is the worst thing any person can do to their body. Every time you inhale the tar and nicotine from a single cigarette, your heart has to pump more blood, faster to the rest of your body. There’s no way around it! Smoking is the number one killer in America. If you never start the nasty habit, they in years down the road; you will not be worrying about how to quit to save your own life!

Author's Purpose Practice Answer Key

1. inform
2. entertain
3. persuade

Step 7: Read the sample paragraph below and then **Copy** the “Variety of Sentence Lengths Notes” below into your notebook.

Read this sample paragraph...

This sentence has five words. This is five words, too. Five word sentences are fine. But several together become monotonous. Listen to what is happening. The writing is getting boring. The sound of it drones. It's like a stuck record. The ear demands some variety. Now listen. I vary the sentence length and I create music. Music. The writing sings. It has a pleasant rhythm, a lilt, a harmony. I use short sentences. And I use sentences of medium length. And sometimes when I am certain the reader is rested I will engage him with a sentence of considerable length, a sentence that burns with energy and builds with all the impetus of a crescendo, the roll of the drums, the crash of the cymbals, and sounds that say listen to this, it is important.

Variety of Sentence Lengths Notes

Write with a combination of short, medium, and long sentences. Create a sound that pleases the reader's ear. Do not just write words. Write music.

Step 8: Copy the “Developing a Unique Writing Voice Notes” below into your notebook and then read the sample paragraph.

Developing a Unique Writing Voice **Notes**

Developing a voice in writing is about finding a unique way of putting words together **and** having a distinctive way of looking at the world.

People want to read an author who is like no other. An original. A standout. A voice.

Things to Understand About Voice in Writing:

- 1) Each writer has a distinct personality.
- 2) Words should capture the writer's personality.
- 3) Strong voice makes the writer's purpose clear.
- 4) Careful word choice, punctuation, paragraphing, and style help strengthen a writer's voice.

Step 9: Copy the “Effective Titles Notes” below into your notebook:

Effective Titles Notes

- Make it reflect the theme
- Make it be “mysterious”, but not too vague
- Make it relatable
- Don't use clichés
- Be original
- Make it memorable

Step 10: Write your rough draft in your notebook using as many skills you learned as possible in the piece. Some of those skills we learned: *following an outline, author's purpose, variety of sentence lengths, developing your voice in writing, effective titles.*

Step 11: Proofread and **revise** your rough draft.

Step 12: Type up the **final copy** of your **Social Commentary** to look like the sample you read earlier.

Step 13: Submit the essay to Google Classroom by the deadline on the calendar.