

## AP Language & Composition Argumentative Prompts

Write a persuasive essay that defends, challenges, or qualifies the biblical assertion that “For in much wisdom is much grief, and increase of knowledge is increase of sorrow” (Ecclesiastes).

A quote from the ancient Greek play *Antigone* states that “The only / Crime is pride.” Do you agree or disagree? Use examples from your reading, observation, or experience.

In Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, the king comments that wealth covers sin and injustice. Defend, challenge, or qualify his view of the relationship between wealth and justice.

Peter Singer argues that prosperous people should donate to overseas aid organizations all money not needed for the basic requirements of life. Evaluate the pros and cons of his argument and indicate which position you find more persuasive.

The Roman poet Horace’s asserted that “Adversity has the effect of eliciting talents, which in prosperous circumstances would have lain dormant.” Do you agree with his view of the part adversity (financial or political hardship, danger, misfortune, etc.) plays in developing a person’s character? Support your argument with evidence from your reading, observation, or experience.

From NPR: “There’s only one health department in Alabama where people can go to be tested for tuberculosis. That’s in Perry County, where an outbreak claimed three lives in 2015. For every 100,000 people there, 253 would be infected; normally in Alabama it’s only 2.5. Now, health officials are trying to get a handle on the disease. But it hasn’t been easy, so officials there decided to take a new approach. The issue was that they were unable to obtain names of contacts to cases. The cases were not willing to share the names of the people they had been around, so they really didn’t know who to test. A few untreated cases mushroomed into this much-bigger problem. To identify carriers of the disease, the health department last week started paying people to come into the clinic - \$20 for a screening, \$20 to come back for results, another \$20 for a chest x-ray. If they finish treatment, they get an extra \$100. Since they’ve been offering cash, there’ve been long wait times at the clinic.

Do you agree or disagree with the incentive program?

The first Buy Nothing Day —a day on which people are urged to purchase zero goods— was organized in Canada in 1992 as a way to increase awareness of excessive consumerism. Consider the implications of a day on which no goods are purchased. Then write an essay in which you develop a position on the establishment of an annual Buy Nothing Day.

American essayist and social critic H. L. Mencken (1880–1956) wrote, “The average man does not want to be free. He simply wants to be safe.” Examine the extent to which Mencken’s observation applies to contemporary society, supporting your position with appropriate evidence.

Kurt Lykke Lindved Ph.D (Culture and Development – United Nations) said this about “culture”:

“‘Culture’ refers to a source, an origin, an identity that makes us ‘beside ourselves’ because we cannot plan, design, change, influence or take responsibility for it. ‘Culture’ appears not only formless, shapeless but also – almost like a piece of real estate that gives us a shelter, a house and a home, but also binds us to a certain place, to the status quo. The word ‘culture’ is as overstated and abused ... The people who get confused about the political process are looking for an escape route in the culture. Those who do not want Turkey to be part of the EU are resorting to the culture.”

He goes on to say that those who do not want to enter partnerships or unions with other countries and who want to keep countries separated/isolated “are talking about culture.” He then states: “The term is so loose in the edge that it cannot justify anything.”

Do you agree or disagree with Dr. Lindved’s view of “culture”?

Susan Sontag, American writer and filmmaker, teacher and political activist, commented about the dangers of photography. She states that: "Photography implies that we know about the world if we accept it as the camera records it. But this is the opposite of understanding, which starts from not accepting the world as it looks." She added that "Needing to have reality confirmed and experience enhanced by photographs is an aesthetic consumerism to which everyone is now addicted. Industrial societies turn their citizens into image-junkies; it is the most irresistible form of mental pollution."

Support, refute, qualify Susan Sontag's claim that photography limits understanding of the world. Use appropriate evidence.