

Age of Responsibility

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STUDENT VERSION

Reading Selection for This Module

Greenblatt, Alan. "What is the Age of Responsibility?" *Governing*. 30 Sept. 2009. Web. 12 Jan. 2011. <<http://www.governing.com>>.

Reading Rhetorically

Prereading

Activity 1

Getting Ready to Read—Quickwrite

Rites

Think of a time when you were told that you were not old enough to do something. How did you feel? Did you have any influence or say in that decision? Did you agree or disagree with the decision and the reasoning behind it? Why?

Follow up: Pair-Share

Activity 2

Getting Ready to Read—"How Old Must I Be?"

Rights

1. Fill out the first "guess" column.
2. In groups of three to four, research the answers for USA and California, and be prepared to report back either later in the period (if the class has immediate access to the Internet), or the next class period.
3. Once everyone has reported back on the legal ages, complete the last column.

How Old Must I Be?

Write down what you think the legal age is for each activity (first column). Fill in the actual correct ages in the when they are revealed

(second column). Then, for each activity, write down your thoughts on whether this seems to be the appropriate legal age and why (third column).

Activity	Legal age USA (guess)	Legal Age California	Is this the appropriate age? Why or why not?
1. Drink alcohol			
2. Drive a car (with a license)			
3. Serve in the military			
4. Attend school (upper required limit)			
5. See R-rated movies			
6. Vote			
7. Get married (without parental consent)			
8. Get an abortion (without parental consent)			
9. Make personal finance decisions			
10. Get a tattoo			

Activity 3

Exploring Key Concepts—Four Corners**Responsibilities**

1. The following excerpt from a *New York Times Learning Network* blog is a response to the question “When should a person be considered an adult?”

I believe that at the age of 21 people should legally be considered adults. I say this because at 18 people are not allowed to consume alcohol for a reason, but at 21 it is legal, so it probably means that 18 year olds can't handle alcohol yet. So why are they considered adults? Another thing is the whole word eight-TEEN basically says that people are still teens not adults. And the fact that most 18 year olds still live with their parents tells you that they are not able to care for themselves yet.

2. Get up and stand by the corner that best describes your response to the blog post above: Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree / Strongly Disagree
3. You will have three minutes to discuss your responses and choose a spokesperson for your “group.”
4. Return to your seats; then, spokespersons will provide a one to two minute rationale for their group's opinion.
5. Complete a quickwrite, answering the following questions: Do you still feel the same way, or have you changed your opinion somewhat? Explain. When should a person be considered an adult?

Activity 4

Surveying the Text

1. What do the title and subheading of Greenblatt's article, “What is the Age of Responsibility?,” tell you about the topic of this article?
2. What can you tell about the article by briefly looking at its length and the length of its paragraphs: Will it be difficult or easy? Why do you feel this way?
3. What do you think is the purpose of this article—to entertain, inform, or persuade readers?

Activity 5

Making Predictions and Asking Questions

1. Read the first two paragraphs and the last paragraph. Predict what the article will be about.

2. Will the article take a strong position on the issue? Briefly explain your answer.

Activity 6

Understanding Key Vocabulary—Guided Highlighting and Self-Assessment

1. Your teacher will project a copy of the article and lead you through the process of highlighting potentially challenging academic vocabulary. Highlight the words your teacher does. Then, copy the words and their paragraph numbers onto your “Vocabulary Self Awareness” chart.

Vocabulary Self-Awareness Chart

WORD		+	✓	-	DEFINITION
	Paragraph #	Know it	Heard of it	New to me	Use the context in the article to help you write it in your own words.

- Examine the list of words or concepts you have written in the first column.
 - Put a "+" next to each word you know well (third column).
 - Put a "✓" next to any words for which you could provide an example or a partial definition, if asked (fourth column).
 - Put a "-" next to the words that are new to you (fifth column).
 - Study your assigned word(s) in context, and write a brief definition in your own words that can be shared with the class (last column).
2. Complete a self-assessment on all ten words.
 3. In your groups, define an assigned word and share definitions according to your teacher's instructions. Students should write down definitions for all ten words.
 4. Your teacher will give you time to study the definitions so that you can take a short fill-in quiz in Activity 7 to assess your level of understanding.

Activity 7

Understanding Key Vocabulary—Academic Vocabulary Fill-In Quiz

Use the word bank below to complete the sentences in the following paragraph about the topic you are about to study. Each word will be used once.

scope	rampant	reprise	revelation	precedent
rite	counterproductive	cohort	tantamount	punitive

"May I have the car keys?" is a familiar refrain to many parents of teenagers, and although it is almost a cliché for older adults, it may come as a _____ to many that the under-eighteen _____ is finding it increasingly more difficult to participate in this quintessentially American _____ of passage—taking the car out for a spin without mom or dad in the passenger seat.

A 2011 _____ this question might be:

"My probationary year was up last week, so I'm going to pick

up Jack and Jill and drop them off before the curfew . . . Can I have the car keys?" The Graduated Driver's License (GDL) may be setting a _____ for policies regulating the _____ of young people's rights. But, could this approach really work with, say, teens and alcohol? Binge drinking is _____ at many college campuses, and the majority of drinkers are likely underage. Supporters of a lowered drinking age believe that forcing young people to wait until they are 21 is _____ to encouraging them to party in unsafe and secretive situations. Those who oppose lowering it to match the social reality say it would be _____ and dangerous, claiming that moving the drinking age to 18 would actually be pushing the limit towards 15 and 16 year olds. Regardless, many experts are suggesting a less _____, more understanding approach to the rights of minors in the hopes of teaching them to take on more responsibility, even as they seek more freedoms.

Reading

Activity 8

Reading for Understanding

Read with the grain for understanding: As your teacher reads part of the article aloud . . .

1. Highlight the ideas you are confused about (in a different color than your vocabulary words).
2. Underline the points that seem to be main ideas.
3. Next to the confusions that you highlighted, write in the right-hand margin any questions you have about meaning.

Complete the reading on your own, or as instructed by your teacher.

4. If you find any sentences that could be the author's thesis, write "thesis" in the right hand margin.
5. Look back at your prediction for the purpose of this article. Did it entertain, inform, or attempt to persuade?

Author's thesis:

6. Does Greenblatt have an explicit (stated) thesis anywhere in the article? If so, write it down.
7. If not, is his point of view on the age of responsibility implicit (implied) throughout the article? What is his opinion on the age of responsibility?

Activity 9

Considering the Structure of the Text—Descriptive Outlining

Your teacher will now give you a version of the article with boxes labeled alphabetically beneath 12 sections of the article. You will be assigned to small groups and with assigned sections C through L. Your teacher will guide you through sections A and B.

The first task is to determine and write the purpose(s) for each section.

- "Purpose" refers to the author's reason for including those paragraphs, as well as the function they serve in the article.

What is the Age of Responsibility?

Alan Greenblatt | September 30, 2009

- 1 Justin McNaull grew up in a hurry. By the time he was 23, McNaull had graduated from college, married and gone to work for his local police force in Virginia. But McNaull, now 36, still bristles at the memory of something he wasn't allowed to do at 23: Go down to the airport counter and rent a car. "I'd been involved in police pursuits at more than 100 mph," he says, "and yet they still wouldn't rent me a car."
- 2 To many young people, rental-car restrictions are more than an annoyance. They're also a confusing contradiction, in terms of what society expects of them. After all, states trust people to drive at a much younger age: Most states issue driver's licenses to persons as young as 16 years old. Yet nearly a decade must pass before the same persons can earn the trust of Hertz or Avis.

A

Purpose:

One-Sentence Summary:

- 3 By the time adolescents become adults, they are accustomed to such inconsistent treatment. Practically from puberty, young people are bombarded with mixed signals about the scope of their rights and the depth of their responsibilities. And most of those mixed signals come from the laws of state and local governments. In most respects, people are considered adults at 18. That's when they can vote and enter into legal contracts—including the purchase, if not rental, of a car. But a 20-year-old Marine, just back from patrolling the streets of Baghdad, would have to turn 21 before he could join a local police force in most cities in the United States. A 20-year-old college junior, far more educated than the average American, cannot buy alcohol or enter a casino. In 10 states, a single 20-year-old cannot legally have sex with a 17-year old. But in nearly every state, a 16-year-old can marry—if he has his parents' permission. (A handful of states allow girls to marry before boys.)
- 4 Recently, many of these lines drawn between adolescence and maturity have been called into question. For example, the presidents of 135 universities are campaigning to consider lowering the drinking age from 21. They note that binge drinking on campus is rampant despite the stricture, and argue that if students were given the right to drink at an earlier age, they might handle it more responsibly. Another argument is a reprise of the one that came up 40 years ago when servicemen came home from Vietnam. Then, the complaint was that soldiers were old enough to die but not to vote. (The 26th Amendment took care of that problem by lowering the voting age to 18.) Today, military personnel returning from Iraq and Afghanistan are left to question why they can fight America's wars but still can't patronize its bars.

B

Purpose:

One-Sentence Summary:

- 5 Meanwhile, legislatures and courts are hearing a very different argument from a group of people that haven't traditionally testified before them: neuroscientists. Using advanced brain-scanning technology, scientists are getting a better view of how the human brain develops than ever before. And what they've found is that in most people, the prefrontal cortex and its links to other regions of the brain

are not fully formed until age 25—much later than anyone had realized. These areas are the seat of “executive decision making”—the parts of the brain that allow people to think through the likely consequences of an action, weigh the risks and benefits and stop themselves from acting on impulse. In other words, the stuff that makes you a mature person.

- 6 To state and local lawmakers and judges, the brain research can come as a revelation: Maybe the car-rental companies were right all along. What to do about this is another matter. In America, “adulthood” already has its familiar compass points, 18 and 21. But what is the age of responsibility? And what if that age—the point when citizens are responsible enough to earn all of the rights a democracy confers upon its people—bears no resemblance to the ages already enshrined in law? Finding the answers to those questions is a more complicated task than simply choosing a milestone birthday.

C

Purpose:

One-Sentence Summary:

- 7 The age at which children are considered mature is rooted in a mix of culture, convenience and historical precedent. Aristotle wrote of 21 as the age when a person would have completed three 7-year stages of youth development. During the Middle Ages, legend has it that 21 was considered the age of adulthood because that’s when men were capable of wearing a full suit of armor. Arbitrary as such reasoning may sound to modern Americans, 21 stuck as a threshold age through the 19th century and into the 20th. Until they turned 21, young people owed their parents either their labor or their wages, whether that meant working on the family farm or operating a machine in an urban factory and handing over their pay.
- 8 Through the middle of the 20th century, the onset of adulthood seemed to come earlier and earlier. War was partly responsible for that, as 18-year-olds went off to fight in World War II, followed by the wars in Korea and Vietnam. On the home front, manufacturing jobs didn’t require a high-school diploma. It was thus common for 18-year-olds to support themselves and start their own families. And the rise of youth culture in the 1950s and 60s turned the teen years into their own distinctive stage of development—and consumer

spending. There was a new sense that reaching the end of this life phase was a rite of passage in and of itself.

D

Purpose:

One-Sentence Summary:

- 9 Nowadays, teens face more cultural pressure than ever to grow up fast, in certain ways. Yet there's a strong pull in exactly the opposite direction, too. Many more 18-year-olds are choosing college over work now than a generation or two ago. They live independently at school for part of the year but under their parents' roofs for the rest. People are getting married later than they used to, and many have become slower about starting their own careers. Even before the current recession, plenty of college grads and dropouts had "boomeranged" back to Mom and Dad's house. Sociologists now talk of "extended adolescence" and "delayed adulthood."
- 10 That means that the window of time during which teens and young adults "grow up" is opening wider. This partly explains why state and local governments are so haphazard when it comes to young people: The law, and the people who write and interpret it, are just as befuddled about how to handle this situation as any anxious parent. Mostly, they have responded by cracking down. On an annual basis, the number of laws regulating the behavior of people under 18 has more than tripled since the 1950s. Curfews are now common. Recently, states have banned minors from purchasing items such as nitrous-oxide inhalants and fruit-flavored mini-cigars. Various jurisdictions have restricted "sexting"—sending lewd photos via cell phones. And 20 states ban only those under 18 from talking on cell phones while driving, despite evidence that the behavior (even using a hands-free device) is treacherous among drivers of all ages.
- 11 So there is a bit of hypocrisy, too, in the way governments define the age of responsibility. While nearly every state recently has put new limits on teen drivers, no state has begun restricting—or even testing—elderly drivers, some of whom may, like teens, lack mastery of their vehicles. Franklin Zimring, a UC Berkeley law professor, suggests that it's easier to block youngsters from obtaining rights than it is to take away rights to which adults have grown accustomed. That's

because states aren't really denying young people rights, Zimring says. They're asking them to wait.

E

Purpose:

One-Sentence Summary:

- 12 As Jack McCardell sees it, the wait can be counterproductive. McCardell is the former president of Middlebury College in Vermont. He's also the leader of the group of college presidents calling for a national debate about the drinking age.
- 13 McCardell believes that the current laws not only are ineffective and unenforceable but also are in fact leading students to drink more heavily in illicit and unsafe circumstances. The problem, he says, is that underage kids don't actually consider themselves underage. McCardell believes this is a direct consequence of the mixed messages states send teenagers about responsibility. "We have a law that is out of step with social and cultural reality," he says.
- 14 Some supporters of holding the drinking age steady acknowledge that 21, when it comes right down to it, is an arbitrary age. Twenty-five might be better, if unrealistic. But they argue that enforcement is a problem at any age, and lowering the legal limit to 18 would only mean pushing the drinking problem further down to 16- and 17-year-olds. Alexander Wagenaar, a health policy professor at the University of Florida, goes further. He believes that lowering the drinking age would be disastrous. After states set the age at 21, he says, teen highway deaths immediately dropped by 15 to 20 percent. "The people who are advocating going down to 18," says Wagenaar, "should acknowledge that they're willing to risk an extra thousand deaths per year and double that number of injuries."

F

Purpose:

One-Sentence Summary:

- 15 The debate about drinking hinges on the question of whether the age of responsibility has been set too high. But in the juvenile justice world, a parallel debate has been going on about whether the age of responsibility has been set too low.
- 16 In the early 20th century, every state created stand-alone legal systems for handling juveniles, defined as those under 18. Advocates of that era described the states as “a sheltering wise parent” that would shield a child from the rigors of criminal law. By the 1980s, however, the idea that rehabilitating such offenders should be the main goal of the system had lost credibility. Due to a spike in juvenile homicides involving handguns—and concerns that young “superpredators” presented an extreme and growing danger to society—legislators passed countless laws that made it easier to try minors as adults. This was true not only for serious matters such as murder and drug crimes but also for minor infractions and misdemeanors. Specific numbers are hard to come by, but on any given day, an estimated 10,000 minors are housed in adult facilities.
- 17 Now, states are just starting to rethink the wisdom of sending 13-year-olds to spend hard time among older, more experienced criminals. According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, youths who had previously been tried as adults are 34 percent more likely to commit a crime again than those who went through the juvenile justice system. Not only do young offenders treated as adults reoffend sooner and more frequently, they’re also more likely to go on to commit violent crimes.
- 18 On this matter, states are finding, nothing is more persuasive than crime data. Despite all the media attention given years ago to superpredators, the vast majority of youth crimes involve property theft and drugs and seldom involve murder. And while there are still roughly 250,000 juveniles tried each year, the rate of crime for this cohort, as measured by arrests, has gone down in each of the past 15 years. Tough policies toward juveniles remain prevalent, but a few states have begun loosening up.

G**Purpose:****One-Sentence Summary:**

- 19 It's precisely because policy toward teens can be so random and emotionally charged that some people find the discoveries about brain development reassuring. The brain scans are putting hard science behind what anyone who has raised an adolescent knows—that young people simply aren't always capable of making good decisions.
- 20 Increasingly, this scientific evidence is being introduced in regard to juvenile justice. In 2005, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the juvenile death penalty after receiving stacks of briefs summarizing the latest adolescent brain research. Scientists now regularly appear before legislative committees, showing pictures that make clear the developmental differences between a 16-year-old brain and that of a 25-year-old. The scans show, in the words of Temple University psychologist Laurence Steinberg, that juveniles may be "less guilty by reason of adolescence." But even scientists are cautious about leaning too hard on the neurobiology.
- 21 Research linking brain structure to actual human behavior is still limited. And neuroscientists are clear about the fact that different parts of the brain mature along different timetables. In other words, executive thinking may not reach its peak until 25 but most people are capable of performing many adult functions adequately at an earlier age—probably between 16 and 21.
- 22 The fact that every person is different and develops at his own pace doesn't make the creation of policy any easier. Parents can guide their children, let them learn from their mistakes when they need to and bail them out when they have to. But laws are less sympathetic. Laws must draw lines, in order to be fair and comprehensible. And there will never be enough brain scans to go around to draw those lines as accurately as we might like.

H

Purpose:

One-Sentence Summary:

- 23 What those laws can do, however, is acknowledge that growing up is a process, not a birthday. And in at least one major policy area—the driving age—states are finding ways to recognize this by introducing youngsters to increasing levels of responsibility, rather than foisting it upon them all at once.

- 24 Of the rights and rites of adulthood, driving holds a special place. On one hand, in a country with meager access to public transit, being able to operate a car is tantamount to mobility. Learning to drive is as essential to taking a first job as it is to going out on a first date—or at least doing those things without being chauffeured around by parents. On the other hand, driving is by far the most likely way that a young person will kill himself or others. According to the CDC, 4,500 Americans between 16 and 19 die from motor vehicle crashes annually, while another 400,000 are injured seriously enough to require emergency treatment. Obviously, driving is a responsibility that must be given to young people with great care.
- 25 The new approach that has taken hold among the states is called “graduated driver licensing,” or GDL. The idea is to license kids to start driving at a certain age, but on a probationary basis. They might have to put in more hours driving with their parents or with professional instructors. They might not be allowed to drive at night. Or they might not be permitted to drive in the company of friends—peer pressure is often a factor when young drivers make bad decisions behind the wheel. GDLs have been implemented in some form in every state except North Dakota.

I

Purpose:

One-Sentence Summary:

- 26 One reason why GDLs have become popular with state lawmakers is because they represent the middle ground in a highly emotional debate. Following a horrific car crash in his district, Illinois state Representative John D’Amico introduced legislation to raise the driving age in his state from 16 to 18. But D’Amico, who is from Chicago, quickly found out that the rural roots of early driving run deep. “I couldn’t get Southern Illinois to agree to it,” he says. Instead, D’Amico proposed a GDL. The law that passed in 2007 tightened nighttime driving curfews for 16- and 17-year-olds and required new drivers to wait a full year before they can carry more than one non-relative.
- 27 The impact was immediate. In 2007 in Illinois, 155 teens between the ages of 16 and 19 died in automobile crashes. In 2008, that number fell to 92. Those results track with findings

on GDLs nationally. According to a Johns Hopkins University study, states with strong GDL laws have cut accidents among young drivers by 40 percent, with injuries down 38 percent.

J

Purpose:

One-Sentence Summary:

- 28 GDLs give adolescents time to practice, with less risk to themselves and other drivers. Their brains may not always make the best judgments about how fast to drive at night or in the rain. But that's somewhat compensated for by the experience they're getting behind the wheel. "The science says that what you want to do with kids is what parents and grandparents know," says Ronald Dahl, a professor of pediatrics and psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh. "If you give them freedom and they can handle it, then they get a little bit more."
- 29 Robert Epstein, a psychologist and author of *Teen 2.0*, says states could learn something from the way they regulate pharmacists and masseurs. Just as those groups are licensed based on the competence requirements of their professions, adolescents could accrue rights based on somehow proving they're up to the task. Teens would do pretty well under such a system, he argues. He's just completed a study of more than 30,000 people showing that 30 percent of American teens are more competent than the median adult in a variety of areas.

K

Purpose:

One-Sentence Summary:

- 30 It would be useful for states to think more broadly when it comes to the age of responsibility. States have been acting in ever-more-punitive ways toward teens. Yet the point of laws regulating the behavior of young people should not be to restrict them. It's to begin educating them in the ways

of responsible adulthood. What's important, after all, is not passing a test or meeting an arbitrary age requirement, but learning lessons and applying them to real life.

L

Purpose:

One-Sentence Summary:

Activity 10

One-Sentence Summarizing

Your group will be assigned a different section for this activity. Write a one-sentence summary for your assigned section.

You may need to write a summary for each paragraph within your section before writing your single sentence summary.

Groups will choose a spokesperson to present their one-sentence summaries while the class writes them down in the appropriate boxes. Your teacher may help groups with this process, so be sure to listen to his or her editing ideas and include them in what you write in the boxes.

Activity 11

Noticing Language—Three R's of Maturity

1. Your teacher will provide you with the "Key Concepts" for the article and briefly discuss them with the class.
2. Three R's chart. Using the Key Concepts handout and the Greenblatt article to guide you, complete the chart with a partner.
3. Discuss the chart as a class, focusing on an understanding of the three R's.
4. Reread paragraph 5 together, and discuss "executive decision making." Note: Neuroscientists have further discovered that the connective/linking tissues in the brain develop from back to front, explaining why the *prefrontal cortex* is one of the last to form.




Age of Responsibility—Key Concepts




3 R's	Definitions	Examples
Rites		
Rights		
Responsibilities		
<p>Put the three concepts together by writing a paragraph that explains a topic in terms of its rites, rights, and responsibilities.</p>		
<p></p>		

Rites, Rights, and Responsibilities—The Three R's of Maturity

Follow the steps as directed by your teacher. For each word or phrase from "What is the Age of Responsibility?" . . .

1. Check the "R" category or categories for each item: Does this word involve rites or customs, laws and legal rights, or legal and personal responsibilities? It's possible to have more than one check mark per word!
2. Then provide an example from everyday life. The first row has been completed for you.

#	¶	Word/Phrase	 Rites	 Rights	 Re- spon- sibilities	An example from every- day life
1	3	rights		✓		Driving a car with a minor in the passenger seat
2	3	responsibilities				
3	4	maturity				
4	4	stricture				
5	5	executive decision making				
6	5	consequences				
7	6	milestone birthday				
8	8	rite of passage				
9	9	getting married				
10	10	curfews				

#	¶	Word/Phrase	 Rites	 Rights	 Re- sponsi- bilities	An example from every- day life
11	11	mastery of their vehicles				
12	12	the drinking age				
13	14	enforcement				
14	16	juveniles				
15	16	murder and drug crimes				
16	23	birthday				
17	24	driving				
18	25	graduated driver licensing				
19	28	best judgments				
20	29	competence requirements				

Activity 12

Noticing Language—Big Concept Admit Slip

Complete the table below for *one* of the big concepts.

Concept:	
Define the concept	Is different from similar concepts...
Examples of this concept are...	Nonexamples of this concept are...
I'll remember the word by...	

Postreading

Activity 13

Responding to the Article

1. From your work charting the text in Activities 9 and 10, what do you think is the essay's main point? Is it explicit, or is it implicit?
2. Which section is the most developed?
3. Which section needs more development?
4. Which section is the most persuasive? The least persuasive? Explain your answer.
5. What was the author's purpose in writing this article?
6. Who do you think was the intended audience?

Activity 14

Thinking Critically—Ethical Questions (*Ethos*)

From the analysis you have done so far, you should be well prepared to analyze the various voices and points of view in the article, the emotional effects of the language on the reader, and the logic and support of the arguments.

1. Who is this author? What can you tell from the information in the text? Does he or she have the background to speak with authority on this subject?
2. If you were going to do an Internet background check on this author, what would you want to find out?
3. What sort of ethos does this writer try to project in this article? What devices does he or she use to project this ethos?
4. Do you trust this author? Do you think this author is deceptive? Why or why not?

Activity 15

Thinking Critically—Questions about Emotional Effects (*Pathos*)

1. Does this piece affect you emotionally? What parts? In what ways?
2. Do you think the author or any of his sources are trying to manipulate your emotions? How?
3. Do your emotions conflict with your logical interpretation of the arguments? In what ways?

Activity 16

Thinking Critically—Logical questions (*Logos*)

Can you think of counterarguments that the author doesn't deal with?

Do you think the author has left something out on purpose? Why or why not?

Activity 17

Analyzing Greenblatt's Sources

This article is as much a presentation of the differing voices in the debate over the age of responsibility as it is an individual's argument. Therefore, it is important to look at the various points of view that Greenblatt brings into his discussion.

For each source, determine the following:

- What is this person or group's view on age and responsibility?

- Does his or her opinion rely more on ethos, logos, or pathos?

Paragraph numbers are in parentheses.

1. Justin McNaull (1-2)
2. State and local lawmakers and judges (6, 10-11)
3. Franklin Zimring (11)
4. Jack McCardell (12-13)
5. Alexander Wagenaar (14)
6. Laurence Steinberg (20)
7. John D'Amico (26-27)
8. Ronald Dahl (28)
9. Robert Epstein (29)

Think-Write-Pair-Share: Finally, all things considered, are you persuaded by this article's thesis and arguments? Why or why not?

Activity 18

Reflecting on Your Reading Process

Quickwrite: Your teacher will ask you to freewrite for a short time about one or more of the following questions. When you have finished, prepare to share your ideas with the class.

- What have you learned from joining this conversation? What do you want to learn next?
- What reading strategies did you use or learn in this module? Which strategies will you use in reading other texts? How will these strategies apply in other classes?
- In what ways has your ability to read and discuss texts like this one improved?

Connecting Reading to Writing

Discovering What You Think

Activity 19

Considering the Writing Task

In "What is the Age of Responsibility?", Alan Greenblatt observes, "In America, "adulthood" already has its familiar compass points, 18 and 21. But what is the age of *responsibility*? And what if that age—the point when citizens are responsible enough to earn all of the

rights a democracy confers upon its people—bears no resemblance to the ages already enshrined in law? Finding the answers to those questions is a more complicated task than simply choosing a milestone birthday.”

Assignment:

What is the age of responsibility? That is, when should a person be considered to be an adult? Use your notes, readings, observations and experience to support your position.

In your response, be sure to consider all three “R’s” (rites, rights, and responsibilities) involved in becoming a mature person, an adult.

Activity 20

Taking a Stance—Quickwrite

The following questions were the prompt for the *New York Times Learning Network* blog post used in the “Four Corners” activity from the start of this unit:

Where would you draw the line to separate adulthood from childhood? Why? Do you think there is one age that could be established as the threshold for everything from drinking to driving to fighting in the military to watching an R-rated movie? Why or why not?

A quickwrite reflecting on these key questions might clarify or help you further engage with the persuasive writing prompt.

Activity 21

Taking a Stance—Formulating a Working Thesis

Thesis Generator: You will use this graphic organizer to generate a thesis for the example below. You will do this first one as a class or in small groups as directed by your teacher. Then you will use the Thesis Generator to create a thesis for your own essay.

Example: How is the relationship between teenagers and their parents affected by the age of responsibility?

1. Identify the subject of your paper	
2. Turn your subject into a guiding question	

3. Answer your question with a statement	
4. Refine this statement into a working thesis	

Topic: What is the age of responsibility? That is, when should a person be considered an adult? Use your notes, readings, observations and experience to support your position.

In your response, be sure to consider all three "R's" (rites, rights, and responsibilities) involved in becoming a mature person, an adult.

1. Identify the subject of your paper	
2. Turn your subject into a guiding question	
3. Answer your question with a statement	
4. Refine this statement into a working thesis	

Activity 22

Taking a Stance—Guiding Questions

Your teacher may have you use a Thesis Generator as a starting point in taking a clear stance on this issue. You may also want to think about or write the answers to the following questions in order to generate your thesis:

1. What is your tentative thesis?
2. What support have you found for your thesis?
3. What evidence have you found for this support (e.g., facts, statistics, statements from authorities, personal experience, anecdotes, scenarios, and examples)?
4. How much background information do your readers need to understand your topic and thesis?

5. If readers were to disagree with your thesis or the validity of your support, what would they say? How would you address their concerns? (What would you say to them?)
6. Think about what most people know and think about the topic of your paper. If you want to change the opinions of the audience, you will need to think about persuasive techniques, both logical and emotional.

Writing Rhetorically

Entering the Conversation

Activity 23

Composing a Draft

The first draft of an essay provides a time for you to discover what you think about a certain topic. It is usually “writer-based,” meaning the goal is simply to get your ideas written down on paper. You should start with your brainstorming notes, informal outlines, freewriting, or whatever other materials you have, and write a rough draft of your essay.

Activity 24

Considering Structure

The following are considerations that you may want to take into account when organizing your texts:

The Beginning or Introduction

- Directs readers’ attention to the topic or issue the writing addresses
- Establishes the importance of the topic
- Provides background information that the audience may need
- Introduces the thesis, purpose, or main claim of the writing in order to suggest how the piece will be developed

The Middle or Body

- Explains, illustrates, and develops the topic or issue
- Contains as many paragraphs as are necessary to develop the ideas
- May have sections and subheadings in some types of writing
- Contains examples or arguments supported by evidence

- Often quotes, paraphrases, or summarizes other texts in support of the purpose of the writing
- May present and analyze data
- Often addresses counterarguments, alternative positions, or explanations
- Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims

The Conclusion

- Connects the writing to some larger claim or idea
- Points the reader to next steps or new questions raised by the writing
- Identifies the conclusion the writer has reached and its significance
- Evaluates or analyzes the conclusions drawn
- Explains the implications of the major point of the writing

Activity 25

Using the Words of Others (and Avoiding Plagiarism)

You may be citing the Greenblatt article or other sources to support the claims in your persuasive essay. The following guide will help you correctly use those sources and properly document them:

One of the most important features of academic writing is the use of words and ideas from written sources to support your own points. Here are three ways to incorporate words and ideas from sources into your own writing:

1. **Direct quotation:** Alan Greenblatt says, "Practically from puberty, young people are bombarded with mixed signals about the scope of their rights and the depth of their responsibilities" (1).
2. **Paraphrase:** In "What is the Age of Responsibility?" Alan Greenblatt notes that starting in their early teens, adolescents receive contradictory messages about their rights and responsibilities (1).
3. **Summary:** In "What is the Age of Responsibility?" Alan Greenblatt cites statistics and examples from different sources to illustrate the range of societal opinions on when a young person matures and becomes an adult. According to the author, "the age of responsibility" is not so much an age as it is the result of a cyclical process of "learning lessons and applying them to real life" (1, 5).

4. **Documentation:** You will also need to learn to take notes with full citation information. For print material, you need to record at least the author's name, title of the publication, city of publication, publisher, publication date, and page number.

The two most common documentation formats are the Modern Language Association (MLA) format, which is used mainly by English departments, and the American Psychological Association (APA) format, used in psychology, social science, and education.

MLA Format

Books: The following is the citation in MLA format for a typical book:

Bean, John C., Virginia A. Chappell, and Alice M. Gilliam. *Reading Rhetorically: A Reader for Writers*. New York: Longman, 2002. Print.

Newspapers: Here is the bibliographic information for the Herbert article in MLA format. The fact that it was published in a newspaper changes the format and the information slightly as follows:

Herbert, Bob. "Hounding the Innocent." *New York Times* 13 June 1999, late ed.; sec. 4: 17. Print.

Web Sites: You might also want to incorporate material from Web sites into your writing. To document a Web site, you need to give the author's name (if known), the title of the site (or a description, such as "Home-page," if no title is available), the date of publication or most recent update (if known), the name of the organization that sponsors the site, and the date of access. The following is an example:

University Writing Center. 26 June 2003. University Writing Center, California Polytechnic State University, Pomona. 26 May 2004. Web.

The name of the author is unknown for the above site so it is left out. This entry would appear in the Works Cited section, alphabetized as "University."

In-Text Documentation: The MLA style also requires in-text documentation for every direct quotation, indirect quotation, paraphrase, or summary. If the author's name is given in the text, the page number is furnished in parentheses at the end of the sentence containing the material. If not, both the name and page number must be furnished. For example, because the author is not named in the following excerpt from the Greenblatt article, his last name is placed in parentheses, followed by the page number (if needed) at the end of the quotation.

“Nowadays, teens face more cultural pressure than ever to grow up fast, in certain ways. Yet there’s a strong pull in exactly the opposite direction, too” (Greenblatt 2).

NOTE: MLA guidelines do not require a page number or paragraph number for in-text documentation of a Web site or electronic source. Page numbers from the Greenblatt article are included here and above for purposes of illustrating parenthetical citation only.

For current information on MLA formatting and style, consult the following page at the Purdue University Online Writing Lab: [MLA Formatting and Style Guide](#).

Revising and Editing

Activity 26

Revising Rhetorically—Peer Editing Groups

Your teacher will have you review your draft essays with your classmates using the procedures in either Activity 26 or Activity 27.

Without speaking to each other, trade drafts with one of your classmates and double underline the thesis, single underline supporting points, and highlight parts that confuse them—adding brief comments next to any highlighted sections that require an explanation. Then, return the edited drafts and briefly confer, one at a time.

Activity 27

Revising Rhetorically—Read-Around Groups

Procedures for Read-Around Groups (RAGs)

1. Bring clean drafts to the RAGs. Do not put your name on the paper. Instead, identify yourself by writing four- or five-digit numbers at the top of your papers.
2. Students are *randomly* placed in groups of four or five—or the teacher creates the groups. The papers are collected in one pile for each group. It is better not to have all the best (or worst) writers at the same table.
3. At the start, on the teacher’s signal, the papers are passed from one group to the next. Students do not read papers by members of their own group. On the teacher’s signal, each student receives one paper and reads it for one minute. Not all students will finish all papers, but in one minute they have an opportunity to get a strong feel for the paper.

4. At the teacher's signal, papers are passed clockwise *within* the groups. Each student now has a new paper and has one minute to read the paper. This process is continued until everyone in the group has read all four or five papers.
5. Once everyone in the group has read the set, each group is charged with the task of determining which paper is the "best." They have two minutes to do so. The hope is that this will produce arguments, because it is through these arguments that students think deeply about the merits of good writing.
6. One student in each group is designated as the recorder. This student records the code number only (in case the group recognizes the writer) of the winning paper.
7. Once the "winner" is recorded, the papers get passed again and the process repeats itself. This is continued until all students have read all papers. Remember, each group is not to score their own papers.

Activity 28

Individual Revision Work

At this point, you are ready to revise your draft on the basis of the feedback you have received and/or the decisions you have made with your partner(s). You might also find it helpful to use the following revision guides on your own:

- Have you responded to the assignment?
- What is your purpose for this essay?
- What should you keep? What is most effective?
- What should you add? Where do you need more details, examples, and other evidence to support your point?
- What could you omit? Have you used irrelevant details? Have you been repetitive?
- What should you change? Are parts of your essay confusing or contradictory?
- Do you need to explain your ideas more fully?
- What should you rethink? Is your position clear? Have you provided enough analysis to convince your readers?
- How is your tone? Are you too overbearing or too firm? Do you need qualifiers?
- Have you addressed differing points of view?
- Does your conclusion show the significance of your essay?

Activity 29

Considering Stylistic Choices

Writers can make stylistic choices in order to enhance the clarity of their messages, make emotional connections with readers, and establish their ethos. These choices draw readers in or push them away. You can consider the effectiveness of your stylistic choices by responding to the following questions:

- How will the language you have used affect your reader's response?
- Which words or synonyms have you repeated? Why?
- What figurative language have you used? Why did you use it?
- What effects will your choices of sentence structure and length have on the reader?
- In what ways does your language help convey your identity and character as a writer?
- Is your language appropriate for your intended audience?

Activity 30

Editing the Draft

You will now need to work with the grammar, punctuation, and mechanics of your draft to make sure your essay conforms to the guidelines of standard written English.

Individual Work

Edit your draft on the basis of the information you have received from your teacher or a tutor. The following suggestions will also help you edit your work:

- If possible, set your essay aside for 24 hours before rereading it to find errors.
- If possible, read your essay aloud so you can hear errors and awkward constructions.
- At this point, focus on individual words and sentences rather than on overall meaning. Take a sheet of paper and cover everything except the line you are reading. Then touch your pencil to each word as you read.
- With the help of your teacher, figure out your own pattern of errors—the most serious and frequent errors you make.
- Look for only one type of error at a time. Then, go back and look for a second type and, if necessary, a third type.
- Use the dictionary to check spelling and confirm that you have chosen the right word for the context.

Activity 31

Reflecting on Your Writing Process—Quickwrite

Your teacher will ask you to write for a short time about one or more of the following questions. After you have written, prepare to share your ideas with the class.

- What have you learned about your writing process?
- What were some of the most important decisions you made as you wrote this text?
- How did “writing about your writing” influence the way you developed your text?
- In what ways have you become a better writer?

