

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Task 1: Analytical Reading and Writing

Sample Writing Assignment and Student Essays

This task is based on reading selection A, "Two Ways of Thinking about Money" by Jerome M. Segal, which you were given to read and study in advance and on Reading Selection B, "There's No Place Like Work" by Arlie Russell Hochschild. The readings are printed below. "There's No Place Like Work" and review "Two Ways of Thinking about Money" in light of the writing assignment, which is printed following Reading Selection B below.

Sample Reading Selection A

Two Ways of Thinking about Money *

Jerome M. Segal

(From Segal, Jerome M. *Graceful Simplicity: The Philosophy and Politics of the Alternative American Dream*. Copyright © 1999. The University of California Press.)

In popular imagery, especially when seen from afar, America is often portrayed as if there were only one meaning to the American Dream. This is not so. The ambivalent response that many in the world have toward American life is mirrored in an ambivalence that many Americans have toward their own life, and this is an essential part of the American tradition, even when people are making it in America. There is always that nagging question, "Is this really the way to live?"

Long before there was an America, there were two American Dreams, and they reflect two ways of thinking about money. In Western thought, from the very beginning to the present day, people had doubts about the real value of riches and the things money can buy. There has always been a conflict between the view that "more is better" and the view that "just enough is plenty."

This divide is reflected in two very different visions of the good life. It is the underlying thesis of this essay that the Alternative Dream, the dream that rests upon the attainment of a simple life, is the sounder vision.

Aristotle's Challenge to our Way of Life

This essay is about contemporary life, but I want to start with Aristotle for two reasons. First, because his challenge to a money-oriented form of life remains as powerful today as it was 2,300 years ago. Second, because, for all his wisdom, Aristotle never had to wrestle with the problems we face. So many of the contemporary problems that prevent people in the middle class from enjoying the good life are the unanticipated consequences of three forms of genuine moral and social progress that Aristotle never envisioned: the elimination of slavery, the liberation of women, and the affirmation of the right of ordinary working people to self-fulfillment. Seeing both the strengths and weaknesses in Aristotle gives us a clearer perspective on our own situation.

Aristotle's *Politics* is surprising in that it opens with a discussion of the household. But this is exactly the right touchstone for both politics and economics. The household is a central ground of the good life, and all economic arrangements must be judged by whether they enable the household to perform its function as locus and support for the human good. This is one of the central messages of this essay: we must put the proper functioning of the household at the center of the way we think about economic life.

The core issue, as Aristotle puts it, is property and "the art of acquisition"—that is, how people make a living. He starts with the observation that there are a variety of different modes of subsistence and that this gives rise to a variety of different ways of life. This is as true among animals as it is of humans. Some animals live in herds, and others live in isolation. Some eat plants and others meat. Among human beings, Aristotle identifies five "natural" ways of life: pastoral, farming, fishing, hunting, and, interestingly, piracy. What he calls "true wealth" is acquired through these activities and consists of the amount of household property that suffices for the good life. This he regards as a limited amount. We can call this the perspective that "just enough is plenty."

In distinction to these modes of acquisition that supply the household with its needs, there is a second form of the art of acquisition, which Aristotle believes to be "unnatural":

The other form is a matter only of retail trade, and it is concerned only with getting a fund of money, and that only by the method of conducting the exchange of commodities. The acquisition

of wealth by the art of household management as contrasted with the art of acquisition in its retail form has a limit; and the object of that art is not an unlimited amount of wealth.¹

The difference is between an approach to acquisition that views it as functional to the life of the household and one in which it takes on a life of its own, such that it reproduces unchecked without regard to the larger life of the organism, and ultimately undermines that life. It is the very description of what we now understand as cancer.

What Aristotle presents here isn't just an academic distinction, but a clash between two different ways of life, each captured by a different way of thinking about money. In the first, money and the things one can buy with it play an important but limited role. Life is not about money. It is not about getting rich. It is about something higher, whether it is philosophy, or art, or the pursuit of knowledge, or participation with one's fellow citizens in the ever-absorbing process of governing the democratic *polis* [city or city-state]. Every person lives within a household, and the household has its economic needs—but the point is to attain only what is sufficient to enable one to turn away from money-getting and undertake the real activities of life.

In this first vision of life, only some ways of making a living are viewed by Aristotle as acceptable. His list of farmer, hunter, fisherman, herdsman, or pirate has an arbitrary quality to it. What is important is what these choices are intended to rule out. The one thing you cannot do is spend your life grubbing for money. You do not become a businessman, a retail trader, a man of commerce. These all represent a kind of slavishness to money. Nor (one would hope) do you find yourself so destitute that you must work for someone else, for that, too, is a form of slavery. The good life requires some degree of good fortune. Ideally for Aristotle, you are born financially independent.

But how do people manage to go so wrong about money? How does it gain such control over their lives? Aristotle suggests that this emerges from a deep misconception about the nature of human happiness; it is this that leads to the focus on the pursuit of higher and higher levels of consumption and of the higher income necessary to sustain them.

Aristotle identifies what he terms “external goods”; these externals include wealth, property, power, and reputation. These are the elements that make up the standard vision of success both then and now. To these, Aristotle contrasts elements of character, what he terms the “goods of the soul”: fortitude, temperance, justice, and wisdom.² This is a familiar distinction, between inner and outer, between matters of worldliness and matters of virtue. We continue to make these distinctions when we are reflective, not so much about our own lives, but when we think about what we want for our children—are we more concerned that our children be rich and successful or that they develop into good human beings? We tell them that these “externals” are not what is really important in life, and we hope that they will listen.

Aristotle tells us that happiness “belongs more to those who have cultivated their character and mind to the uttermost, and kept acquisition of external goods within moderate limits.”³ Those who lose in life are those “who have managed to acquire more external goods than they can possibly use and are lacking in the goods of the soul.”⁴ (For “soul” we might substitute “character” or “mental health.”)

Of course, one might say, “Why the either/or? Why not have both?” But Aristotle, and many others, thought that we really do have to choose. In explaining the relationship between externals and the good life, Aristotle tells us: “External goods, like all other instruments, have a necessary limit of size... any excessive amount of such things must either cause its possessor some injury, or at any rate, bring him no benefit.”⁵

Aristotle is saying that with all external goods, we find that the more we have, the less utility we receive from each additional amount, and that at some point “any excessive amount” does us no good and may even harm us. In other words, the pleasure from the first ice-cream cone is greater than from the second, and most of us can hardly eat a third.

Translated into a thesis about money, Aristotle's formulation tells us that, beyond a given level, additional increments of money are not only useless, but negative in their effect. Translated into a thesis about the society at large, it suggests that economic growth beyond a given point is actually harmful to human happiness. It is a straightforward rejection of the idea that “more is better.”

Aristotle goes further in his account. For Aristotle the issue is even more serious than a life of wasted pursuit. The pursuit of higher and higher levels of income results in a distortion of the personality, such that we never come to be the persons that we most truly are; we are divorced from our truest selves. Instead, people are “led to occupy themselves wholly in the making of money... using each and every capacity in a way not consonant with its nature.”⁶

It should be clear that Aristotle's critique is not merely about certain specific economic activities (e.g., retail sales as opposed to production). It is an indictment of a general outlook and form of life. When these become dominant in society, the object of criticism is then the entire form of social life or civilization. Such a civilization, and I believe Aristotle would include much of the modern world in this category, is to be condemned as representing a distortion of human nature and a general thwarting of the possibility of human fulfillment.

When every human capacity gets placed at the service of obtaining money, *we ourselves are transformed and distorted.*⁷ That's why you can't have it all—why there is conflict between the two American Dreams—who “you”

are changes through the choices you (and your household) make toward matters of acquisition, careers, “success.” Within the Aristotelian framework, to say that our capacities—that is, our selves—are separated from their proper function is to say that we are thus denied self-actualization or human fulfillment. It is also to say that we are thus denied the possibility of living well; for to live well for Aristotle is to express one’s richest potentials at high levels of excellence.

Thus, Aristotle, in his analysis of the limited place of money in the good life, and in his emphasis on how absorption in acquisition undermines both the healthy personality and the good life, can be seen as the intellectual father of a philosophy of simple living. But before leaving Aristotle, we must recognize the other side of the picture. Aristotle was not a believer in the general equality of all men and women. Though he did not believe that specific races of people deserve to be enslaved, he believed that there were some individuals who were “natural slaves” in that they lacked the capability of governing themselves. Of course, at some point in life—when we are children—we all lack this capability. But Aristotle believed that a significant class of adult males, and women generally, lacked the capability to govern themselves.

These views about the naturalness of slavery and the subservience of women turn out to have an intimate relationship to the question of simple living, and to graceful living in particular. Ultimately, I want to argue that most wealth resides in the ability to draw on the services of other people. We normally think of such wealth as residing in financial assets (e.g., money, stocks, bonds, real estate), but it can equally reside in relationships (e.g., friendship, parent-child relationships, marriage). It can also reside in institutionalized relations of unequal power such as slavery, rigid class distinctions, and the domination of women. When one has access to the services of others through such institutional structures, it is indeed easier to live well with less money; one has found nonmonetized ways of accessing valued services. The great challenge is thus to find a way to live simply and well, not only without excessive dependence upon money, but without reliance on unjust social institutions such as slavery, patriarchy, and rigid class systems.

For Aristotle, this never really clicked into place. While he recognized that not all who were in fact slaves were of a “slavish nature,” he did not challenge slavery itself. Likewise, for Aristotle, the existence of mass poverty does not emerge as a problem. With his acceptance of the naturalness of slavery and the subservience of women, and his acquiescence to the limited servitude of workers, the socioeconomic frameworks of the Greek city-states in which he lived fit neatly into a theory of human development. The city-state or *polis* is the environment within which human fulfillment occurs. That the vast majority of persons simply fall by the wayside does not raise any pressing problems in Aristotle’s worldview. Having limited potential, they reach their full development within subservient roles. Indeed, it is really not until the eighteenth century that the equality of ordinary people in their entitlement and potential for achieving the highest levels of human development finds support from political ideologies and groups. And it is not until the twentieth century that equality begins to be substantially extended to women.

In spite of these flaws, what Aristotle did do remains of enormous importance. He challenged the idea that acquiring more and more things was good for the individual. He set his critique of commercial and acquisitive forms of life within a theory of human development that stressed the exercise and perfection of distinctly human capacities, capacities that are distorted and stunted if we allow economic pursuits to dominate our lives. We have lost sight of much that Aristotle has to teach us with respect to the place of the economic within the good life: *The point of an economy, even a dynamic economy, is not to have more and more; it is to liberate us from the economic—to provide a material platform from which we may go forth to build the good life. That’s the Alternative American Dream.*

Simple Living and American Dreams

We entirely mistake our own history if we think of simple living as some recent fad. The idea of simple living has always been part of the American psyche—sometimes central, sometimes only a minor theme, but always present. From the earliest days of the American experience, advocates of simple living have challenged consumerism and materialism. Simple living, especially in America, has meant many things.⁸ For Christians, the central inspiration for a life of simplicity has been the life of Jesus. In the hands of the Puritans, this emerged as a life of religious devotion, a lack of ostentation, and plenty of hard work. It was certainly not a leisure expansion movement as it is today. Nor was simple living a matter of individual choice; laws about consumption invoked the power of the state to restrict conspicuous display, and economic life was regulated to limit the role of greed in human affairs.

In the hands of the Quakers, the concept of the simple life underwent an evolution. For the Puritans, at least part of the motivation for sumptuary laws was to prevent those in the lower classes from putting on the manners of those above them; among Quakers, the restrictions on display and consumption became more widely applicable. Most important, the pursuit of luxurious consumption was linked to a broad range of injustices and social problems, including alcoholism, poverty, slavery, and ill treatment of the Indians. Here, perhaps, are the origins of a radical politics of plain living—the belief that if people adopted the simple life, all of society would be transformed.

The key Quaker theorist of the simple life was John Woolman. Central to Woolman's thought was the recognition that people could be "necessitated to labor too hard." Thus, he maintained that "every degree of luxury of whatever kind and every demand for money inconsistent with divine order hath some connection with unnecessary labor." Woolman saw his listeners' desire for luxurious consumption as the core motive that resulted in slavery, the practice "of fetching men to help to labor from distant parts of the world, to spend the remainder of their lives in the uncomfortable conditions of slaves." He also identified selfishness as the cause of past wars, telling us to "look upon our treasures, and the furniture of our houses, and the garment in which we array ourselves, and try [to see] whether the seeds of war have nourishment in these our possessions, or not." Were Woolman alive today, it is likely that he would extend his critique, arguing that excessive consumption, and the desire for it, is at the root of both the drug and environmental problems we face. Indeed, Woolman would probably have been receptive to the idea that the harsh poverty of many Third World countries emerges from the excessive consumption of the rich nations.⁹

In the mid-1700s, in the years prior to the American Revolution, the ideas of simple living and democratic government were intertwined. For many of the leaders of the Revolution, however, the ideal was not the simple life of Jesus, but the simple life of the self-governing citizens of ancient Greece and Rome. Key figures in the revolutionary period, in particular Samuel Adams, were deeply concerned about the relationship between our political health and the individual pursuit of luxury. The rebirth of democracy in the world brought with it an interest in the ancient Greek and Roman experiments, and why they disappeared. There was a concern (as there is today) with the virtue of officeholders. Genuine democracy seemed incompatible with too great an absorption in getting rich. There was great fear of the corrupting influences of unbridled commercialism. When the colonists boycotted British goods, it was not just a tactic of the independence movement; Britain was viewed as the Great Satan, exporting the corruptions of capitalism.

Benjamin Franklin's views on these questions are also worth noting; they, too, have a contemporary echo. In Franklin we have an unusual mixture: the espousal of frugality, hard work, and restrained consumption as the vehicles for getting ahead, the central patterns of behavior that will lead to wealth. Franklin was concerned with how the average person might remain free in his own life, be his own master. He warns of the perils of spending and in particular of borrowing. The great thing is to save. Franklin also warned that the dangers of excessive consumption are easily missed. In this vein, Franklin rails against going into debt. Credit cards would have seemed to him the instruments of our undoing. "What Madness must it be to run in Debt for these Superfluities!... think what you do when you turn in Debt; you give to another Power over your Liberty.... Preserve your Freedom; and maintain your Independence: Be Industrious and free; be frugal and free."¹⁰

Filled with a sense of adventure and experiment, but less interested in accumulating wealth, was Henry David Thoreau. In *Walden*, he looked about himself and saw mostly foolishness—people not knowing how to grab hold of the gift of life. With words that had echoes of Aristotle, he told Americans that our necessities are few, yet we subject ourselves to endless labor. He described a world that had taken the wrong turn. "The twelve labors of Hercules were trifling in comparison with those which my neighbors have undertaken; for they were only twelve and had an end."¹¹ Wealth itself is a curse because it enslaves us. "I see young men, my townsmen, whose misfortune it is to have inherited farms, houses, barns, cattle and farming tools; for these are more easily acquired than got rid of." We miss that which is best in life. "Most men, even in this comparatively free country, through mere ignorance and mistake, are so occupied with the factitious cares and superfluously coarse labors of life that its finer fruits cannot be plucked by them."¹²

Yes, the necessities must be met, "for not till we have secured these are we prepared to entertain the true problems of life with freedom and a prospect of success."¹³ But "most of the luxuries, and many of the so-called comforts of life are not only not indispensable, but positive hindrances to the elevation of mankind. With respect to luxuries and comforts, the wisest have ever [always] lived a more simple and meager life than the poor."¹⁴ For Thoreau, it is not necessity that enslaves us. Rather we have become the "slave-drivers" of ourselves, "the slave and prisoner of our own opinion of ourselves." Once we have satisfied our necessities, rather than laboring for superfluities, it is time to "adventure on life." But few undertake this adventure. Instead, "the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation."¹⁵ It is from a disease of the spirit that Thoreau recoils.

Thus Thoreau called Americans away from their over-absorption with economic life, from their self-subjugation to a life of toil. Unlike earlier advocates of simple living, he was not calling people to religion or to civic engagement; rather he was calling us as individuals to find our own nature, to define ourselves at a higher level of experience. He called for simple living in order to enable the life of the mind, of art, literature, poetry, philosophy, and an almost reverential engagement with Nature.

Interest in simple living was harder to find in the post-Civil-War period, but it reemerged powerfully toward the turn of the century. There was a reaction against materialism and the hectic pace of urban life. In those days it was *The Ladies' Home Journal* (of all things) that led the charge against the dominant materialist ethos. Under a crusading editor, Edward Bok, it served as a guide for those in the middle class seeking simplicity.

After World War II, as after World War I, the Civil War, and the American Revolution, there was a surge in consumption, and simple living receded into the background. But again in the 1960s there was a critique of the affluent lifestyle and a renewed interest in plain living. In the 1970s, with the energy crisis, this merged with a broad environmentalism. Many saw the energy crisis not as an economic or political problem to be overcome, but as an occasion for a spiritual renewal that would turn us away from the rampant materialism of modern life. One of these was President Jimmy Carter.

“We worship self-indulgence and consumption,” Carter declared, taking his place in a great American tradition of social criticism. “Human identity is no longer defined by what one does but by what one owns.” And, like earlier critics, Carter lamented the emptiness of such an existence. “We’ve discovered that owning things and consuming things does not satisfy our longing for meaning.”

Carter saw the problem as residing in what he termed “a mistaken idea of freedom”—one in which we advocate “the right to grasp for ourselves some advantage over others.” He called on Americans to unite together in a crusade of energy conservation:

We often think of conservation only in terms of sacrifice... solutions to our energy crisis can also help us to conquer the crisis of spirit in our country. It can rekindle a sense of unity, our confidence in the future, and give our nation and all of us individually a new sense of purpose.¹⁶

This was his so-called “malaise” speech, and while it failed as an effort to transform the national spirit, and certainly failed Carter politically, it did capture well the link between environmental concerns and simple living that many Americans continue to feel today. Carter was followed by the Reagan and Bush administrations, during which no similar critique was heard. But now, at the turn of the millennium, there is renewed interest in simple living, if not in the White House, then at least in the heartland.

This quick historical survey reveals that “simple living” has meant many things. There is an anticonsumptionist core in much American thinking on this subject, but great diversity with respect to the human good and the place of work, religion, civic engagement, nature, literature, and the arts. Concern with simple living has been largely apolitical at some times, and at others the heart of a general political and social vision.

Today, when there is once again a great interest in simple living in America, it is mainly an apolitical enthusiasm. Most, though not all, of the literature is of a “how to” variety, offering advice on how to live more rewardingly with less money. The attainment of a simpler, more meaningful life is seen as an individual project, not as a matter of collective politics. This individualistic approach unfortunately has many limitations. It needs to be supplemented by a broader, more collective “politics of simplicity.”

¹ Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Ernest Barker (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 26.

² *Ibid.*, p. 280.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 280.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 280.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 281.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁷ Contemporary economic thought, taken in formal terms, can accommodate almost anything. Thus, the distortion of personality can be viewed as “an externality” generated by market transactions, adding to the costs of every market interaction. But virtually no economists have expanded the idea of externalities to include distortions of personality. It remains a formal possibility, but consideration of such impacts, central to earlier eras, is largely outside of the way we think of the economic realm.

⁸ This is wonderfully explicated in David Shi’s study *The Simple Life?: Plain Thinking and High Living in American Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), and I have drawn heavily upon Shi’s account for this summary.

⁹ John Woolman, “A Word of Remembrance and Caution to the Rich” in *Words That Made American History*, ed. Richard N. Current and John A. Garroty (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1965).

¹⁰ “The Way to Wealth” in *Benjamin Franklin, Autobiography and Other Writings* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Riverside Press, 1958).

¹¹ Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 4.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁶ Jimmy Carter, “Energy Problems: The Erosion of Confidence,” *Vital Speeches XLV* (15 August 1979): 642, 643 as excerpted in David E. Shi, *In Search of the Simple Life* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs M. Smith, 1986).

Sample Reading Selection B

"There's No Place Like Work"

Arlie Russell Hochschild

(From Hochschild, Arlie Russell. "There's No Place Like Work." *New York Times Magazine* 20 April 1997: 50-7.)

Nationwide, many working parents are struggling. More mothers of small children than ever now work outside the home. In 1993, 56 percent of women with children between 6 and 17 worked outside the home full-time year-round; 43 percent of women with children 6 and under did the same. Meanwhile, fathers of small children are not cutting back hours of work to help out at home. If anything, they have increased their hours at work. According to a 1993 national survey conducted by the Families and Work Institute in New York, American men average 48.8 hours of work a week, and women 41.7 hours, including overtime and commuting.

Let's take look at a specific company, which I will call Amerco. Amerco has "family friendly" policies. If your division head and supervisor agree, you can work part-time, share a job with another worker, work some hours at home, take parental leave or use "flex time." But hardly anyone uses these policies. In seven years, only two Amerco fathers have taken formal parental leave. Fewer than 1 percent have taken advantage of the opportunity to work part-time. Of all such policies, only flex time—which rearranges but does not shorten work time—has had a significant number of takers (perhaps a third of working parents at Amerco).

Forgoing family friendly policies is not exclusive to Amerco workers. A 1991 study of 188 companies conducted by the Families and Work Institute found that while a majority offered part-time shifts, fewer than 5 percent of employees made use of them. Thirty-five percent offered "flex place"—work from home—and fewer than 3 percent of their employees took advantage of it. And an earlier Bureau of Labor Statistics survey asked workers whether they preferred a shorter workweek, a longer one, or their present schedule; 28 percent would have preferred longer hours. Fewer than 10 percent said they wanted a cut in hours.

To be sure, some parents have tried to shorten their work hours. Twenty-one percent of the nation's women voluntarily work part-time, as do 7 percent of men. But while working parents say they need more time at home, the main story of their lives does not center on a struggle to get it. Why? Given the hours parents are working these days, why aren't they taking advantage of an opportunity to reduce their time at work.

The most widely held explanation is that working parents cannot afford to work shorter hours. Certainly this is true for many. But if money is the whole explanation, why would it be that at places like Amerco, the best-paid employees—upper-level managers and professionals—were the least interested in part-time work or job sharing, while clerical workers who earned less were more interested? Similarly, if money were the answer, we would expect poorer new mothers to return to work more quickly after giving birth than rich mothers. But among working women nationwide, well-to-do new mothers are not much more likely to stay home after 13 weeks with a new baby than low-income new mothers,

A second explanation goes that workers don't dare ask for time off because they are afraid it would make them vulnerable to layoffs. With recent downsizings at many large corporations, and with well-paying, secure jobs being replaced by lower-paying, insecure ones, it occurred to me that perhaps employees are "working scared." But when I asked Amerco employees whether they worked long hours for fear of getting on a layoff list, virtually everyone said no.

Were workers uninformed about the company's family-friendly policies? No. Some even mentioned that they were proud to work for a company that offered such enlightened policies. The evidence, however counterintuitive, pointed to a paradox: workers at the company I studied weren't protesting the time bind. They were accommodating themselves to it.

Why? I did not anticipate the conclusion I found myself coming to: namely, that work has become a form of "home" and home has become "work." The worlds of home and work have not begun to blur, as the conventional wisdom goes, but to reverse places. We are used to thinking that home is where most people feel the most appreciated, the most truly "themselves," the most secure, the most relaxed. We are used to thinking that work is where most people feel like "just a number" or "a cog in a machine." It is where they have to be "on," have to "act," where they are least secure and most harried.

But the new management techniques that are so pervasive in the corporate world have helped transform the workplace into a more appreciative, personal sort of social world. Meanwhile, at home the divorce rate has risen, and the emotional demands have become more baffling and complex. In addition to teething, tantrums, and the normal developments of growing children, the needs of elderly parents are creating more tasks for the modern

family—as are the blending, unblending, reblending of new stepparents, stepchildren, ex-spouses, and former in-laws.

Current research suggests that, however hectic their lives, women who do paid work feel less depressed, think better of themselves, and are more satisfied than women who stay at home. One study reported that women who work outside the home feel more valued than housewives do. Meanwhile, work is where many women feel like “good mothers.”

Many workers feel more confident they could “get the job done” at work than at home. One study found that only 59 percent of workers feel their “performance” in the family is “good or unusually good,” while 86 percent rate their performance on the job this way. The reality is that, increasingly, Americans say they want more time with their families, but the truth is that they would rather be at the office.

Sample Writing Assignment

With these reading selections by Jerome M. Segal and Arlie Russell Hochschild in mind, write an essay in which you discuss the role of work in a person's life. In your essay, summarize Segal's key points about the importance of work and money. Draw a relationship between Segal's thinking and what you have just read about American attitudes toward the workplace. In light of the reading selections, discuss your own knowledge or observations about the role of work in a person's life. Also discuss the degree to which your perspective reflects the ideas of either or both writers.

CUNY Proficiency Examination Task 1 Scoring Guide

A. Develops an essay that presents a focused response to the writing assignment, making appropriate and coherent connections among all parts of the assignment.	B. Demonstrates understanding of the readings through summary and explanation of relevant material.	C. Incorporates, as support for own thoughts, references to the readings, identifying the sources formally or informally.	D. Communicates clearly and effectively, using appropriate conventions of language (e.g., grammar, spelling, punctuation).
6 Addresses the writing assignment fully, analytically, and perhaps critically or imaginatively, with superior focus and coherence.	6 Demonstrates superior and perhaps critical understanding of readings through accurate summary, full explanation, and insightful analysis of relevant sections.	6 Makes insightful connections and distinctions between readings and own ideas; integrates references smoothly into own essay and identifies them consistently and correctly.	6 Communicates with precision and enhanced expression through highly effective use of vocabulary and sentence variety; infrequent, if any, lapses in use of conventions.
5 Addresses the writing assignment fully and analytically, with strong focus and coherence.	5 Demonstrates strong understanding of readings through accurate summary, with appropriate explanation and analysis of relevant sections.	5 Makes analytical connections and perhaps distinctions between readings and own ideas; integrates references into own essay and identifies them consistently and correctly.	5 Communicates effectively throughout the essay, with few lapses in use of conventions.
4 Addresses all parts of the writing assignment with adequate focus and coherence throughout.	4 Demonstrates overall understanding of readings through appropriate summary and explanation, with some analysis.	4 Makes and explains appropriate connections between readings and own ideas; identifies references consistently and correctly.	4 Communicates clearly throughout the essay; sentences may contain some lapses in use of conventions, but these rarely impede comprehension.
3 Addresses all or most parts of the writing assignment adequately, but focus may lapse briefly or connections may be missing.	3 Demonstrates generally accurate understanding of readings although summary or explanation may be incomplete or not fully relevant.	3 Makes some connections between readings and own ideas but they may not all be appropriate or adequately explained; identifies most references consistently and correctly.	3 Generally communicates clearly throughout the essay although lapses in use of conventions may at times impede comprehension or prove distracting.
2 Addresses some parts of the writing assignment or addresses all parts superficially; focus or coherence may break down at several points.	2 Demonstrates partial understanding of the readings through summary or explanation, but understanding is flawed or explanation is incomplete.	2 Makes few or unwarranted connections between readings and own ideas; may identify references inconsistently or incorrectly.	2 Communicates clearly at times, showing some ability to use conventions, but whole sections are unclear or errors frequently impede comprehension.
1 Shows little or no ability to address the writing assignment; may not link thoughts between paragraphs.	1 Demonstrates little or no understanding of text.	1 Makes no reference to background reading or makes no distinctions between background reading and own ideas.	1 Communicates little because few sentences demonstrate appropriate use of conventions.

Sample Student Essays

The essays on the following pages, written by CUNY students who took the CPE in Spring 2005, are printed with permission. These responses are included in this booklet to give you a sample that demonstrates the various levels of writing proficiency. As you review these essays, please have your copy of the CUNY Proficiency Examination Scoring Guide handy (see preceding page) so that you can note how each paper illustrates the specified level of writing proficiency and the way the comments on each paper reflect the four scoring criteria:

- developing a focused essay
 - demonstrating understanding of the readings
 - incorporating appropriate references
 - communicating clearly and effectively
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Essay A

What is the meaning of life? Or perhaps more accurately stated, what is our purpose in life? Essentially, that is the question that both Segal and Hochschild pose in their respective essays. Segal argues that the importance of life is found in our spiritual and social pursuits. He asserts that in order to pursue such things we must live a simple life; earning only what we need to be able to turn our attention to that which is important. His claim is that those who pursue material wealth as their ultimate goal are consumed by a way of life which will enslave them, leaving them empty and unhappy. Hochschild, on the other hand does not argue for one way of life over the other. She merely explains the state of affairs and the mindset of the current American worker. Hochschild finds that most Americans spend long hours at work, and do so not only for the material benefits but for the satisfaction it supplies. It is a satisfaction that many can no longer find within the home. Thus, it appears that Americans today feel they must find their self worth in their work.

Segal's notions as to the importance of the simple life date back to Aristotle. Aristotle argued, as Segal does today, that one cannot both have a fulfilling social and spiritual life as well as vigorously pursue material wealth. The argument is that the desire for material goods is a never ending struggle, that it will take over the entire life of the individual. Indeed a study done a number of years ago showed that people from 5 different economic brackets felt they just needed more money to be happy. Even those making over \$200,000 a year said they needed more. However, another study showed that once people make enough money to afford basic necessities (food, clothing, shelter) there was no correlation between wealth and happiness. This evidence certainly supports Segal's claims that over-concern with money is all consuming, and also that it does not bring happiness.

If as Segal argues, happiness is to be found outside of one's work it follows that one should work as little as possible. Segal endorses the idea that one should work only as much as they need to in order to survive. On this aspect he cites Thoreau who believed that the majority of men had become slaves to their work. What Segal, and those he quotes, have failed to consider is that people might find their spiritual or social happiness in the workplace. Although Segal says we must turn away from work in order to be happy, he does not actually explain in what way we are to find happiness. Without contradicting Segal's argument that the simple life is better to live, it is plausible to say that happiness may be found in the workplace, so long as people work for other reasons than just material gain.

Many argue that the only reason people work is to make money. It seems a strange notion that someone would not maximize their leisure time if it were possible. However Hochschild finds that even the highest paid employees feel a desire to work long hours. Surely it is not because they are struggling to survive. It could very well be that they feel compelled to obtain more wealth, that they have been consumed by greed in the way that Segal describes. But it appears according to Hochschild that people feel confident in their work environment and are proud of the work they do. In fact many of them seem to feel they do a better job at work than they do at home. Though sadly much of this is due to the increasingly unstable homelife of many Americans, it does demonstrate that there is satisfaction to be found through work. In fact, Hochschild's research even showed that working women felt like "good mothers" while those who stayed at home felt less valued and more depressed.

Thus while Segal's theory that concern with material gain leads to obsession and unhappiness holds weight, it does not follow that the work itself is the cause of the unhappiness. As Hochschild demonstrates, many Americans find satisfaction through their work. It seems clear that the household that Segal refers to and the one that Hochschild speaks of are very different. Whether or not more satisfaction can be gained through activities of the home or the workplace seems unclear. However it does appear that while limiting the desire for material gain our work may serve as an aspect of life that we are proud of and we may even find happiness in it.

Comments on Essay A: Score = 6 6 6 6

This well-focused essay addresses both readings from the beginning and integrates them into a coherent whole. The writer succinctly and accurately summarizes relevant sections of each text, linking similar themes but being careful to identify the key differences between the two authors' views on American attitudes to work. Instead of writing about personal experience, the writer reflects effectively on more general observations of American mores and culture, while making insightful connections and distinctions between the two texts and the writer's own ideas. Although there are a few punctuation errors, the writing, throughout, is precise and effective.

Essay B

The United States has always been thought of as the "land of opportunity" by the immigrants that arrived on our shores. They have migrated here and continue to do so to accomplish the American dream, or their interpretation of that dream. They come to America to improve the quality of their lives as well as wanting more opportunities for their children. The role of work in their lives is extremely important because of their belief that through hard work they can accomplish their "American Dream" for the benefit of their families. The role of work in our lives as well as those that migrate to the United States is to achieve financial independence and an opportunity to give our children better lives than what we had growing up. Putting so much importance on the role of work in our lives puts us at risk of losing sight on what is truly important, our spiritual and family life, that which we are working so hard for.

In Jerome Segal's article, "Two ways of Thinking About Money", he discusses the role of work and money as well as the consequences that may occur when we, as a society, take the relationship of work and money to an extreme. In other words Segal does not say that one should not work or that one should not have money, his view is that society does not stop or curb its want for "more" which as he states, is not necessarily better. He believes that we're not satisfied by having "just enough" to sustain ourselves. The idea of living a simple life is put forth by Segal by his historical survey starting with Aristotle through former president, Jimmy Carter. According to Segal there has always been a conflict between the view of "more is better" and "just enough is plenty". Segal's position is that the latter, or what he calls the "attainment of a simple life" is the better choice. His argument is backed by his discussion of Aristotle's view which challenged the "idea that acquiring more and more things was good for the individual". Segal believes that there is an "alternative American Dream", that the point of an economy/work is not to help us get more and more but to help us construct a good life, to help us sustain ourselves and to maintain a good life. Segal then discusses simple living in relation to the Puritans and Quakers, who believed that excessive consumption was the root of all evil in society: for example, the Quaker theorist, John Woolman, believed that it led to slavery as well as the cause for war.

Segal also discusses the views of our founding fathers who were also against "excessive consumption" as well as Henry David Thoreau who believed that "wealth itself is a curse because it enslaves us". He believed that once we have worked to have enough to sustain ourselves, it was time to concentrate on our "life", improving the quality of our lives, spiritually, mentally and physically, not work more to attain more money or more material things. The lesson that Segal wants us to learn is that we should not live to work, but work to live and to live well, not by accumulating money or object but by accumulating quality of life, spirit, mind and body. Furthermore, he believes that this want to have a "simple life" must come about in society as a whole, not as an individual pursuit for it to work.

In the article "There's no place like work" by Russell Hochchild, we are made aware of the shift in society's view that emphasis is placed more on the workplace than in the household. This was one of the consequences Segal discussed in his article if society continued to want more and more. Hochchild states in his article that people feel more comfortable at work, that it is an "escape" from their home life. Again, this is what Segal fears, the deterioration of the household and the eating away of our nature, which Segal relates to as a "cancer". Hochchild also states that those employees with higher salaries are those that do not reduce their work hours. This goes back to the Segal article where he states that as we attain more (money, wealth, material goods) we just want more, we are not satisfied with what we already have. As previously stated, the American view towards the workplace is as an escape from their home life, which contradicts Segal's view that our emphasis should be on our home life, our household, not by making it financially wealthier but by enriching it spiritually mentally and physically. Hochchild's article shows again what Segal feared, the destruction of the household, of human spirit.

Being that my parents and I were immigrants, I have seen my parents work very hard to give both my brother and I a better life. I saw the sacrifices my parents made by always working. I can understand how the extremes of work and money can affect us, as Segal states in his article but I don't feel that in my household my parents weren't there for me, they always were, both spiritually and emotionally. I don't agree that working hard makes one a bad person or that it changes us. What I have learned, especially from my parents is that if you work hard you can achieve a better life. They came to the United States not knowing a soul, didn't speak the language, yet by working hard they have enriched their lives as well as their children's lives mentally and spiritually. As an adult and as a member of the work force, I will not compromise my home life. The relationships and ties of our lives at home with family and friends should be much more important than workplace. Parents spending more time at home than at work may be our saving grace to help society's slow deterioration stop and instead grow in the future, for our sake and for our children.

Comments on Essay B: Score = 5 5 5 5

This strongly organized essay considers both readings as reflections on “the American dream” and the role of work in achieving it. The writer presents accurate and appropriate summaries of the texts and analyzes their relationship extensively in terms of cause and effect and comparison and contrast. In clear and effective language, the writer’s discussion of the American dream concludes with a relevant discussion of the working life of an immigrant family.

Essay C

In Jerome M. Segal’s writing, “Two Ways of Thinking about Money,” he talks about how there “were two American Dreams, and they reflect two ways of thinking about money” (Segal, 3). Segal also discusses the conflicting views that “more is better” as opposed to “just enough is plenty.” (Segal, 3). He insinuates through different author’s writings that money should not be your main concern, and that you should only work to obtain a standard economic life.

As a foundation, Segal uses Aristotle’s views to discuss this issue concerning “more is better” and “just enough is plenty,” which Aristotle describes as a natural versus unnatural way of life. Aristotle explains how the household should be central when we think about our economic life. Segal also uses different religions’ views on working and acquiring wealth and how this leads to an unfulfilling life. The author shows through several different philosophers and political theorists how the simple life is more rewarding in the end.

In the writing, “There is No Place Like Work,” by Arlie Russel Hochschild, she describes how nationwide people are giving up there lives at home and putting in more time at work. Hochschild explains how many jobs offer part-time work, flex time and child care leave and how few employees take advantage of it. The employees would rather work then spend time with their families. Segal makes it clear in his essay that the only reason people should be working hard is to better the household and that once you acquire what is sufficient for the household you should relax and enjoy it. He explains that too much of anything can be a bad thing. So, if people spend all there time at the office working, they are denying themselves the pleasure of spending quality time with their families. Hochschild discusses the reason people are spending more time at work has little to do with money because the higher paid employees were less likely to take time off than the lower paid employees. Since the higher paid employees make more money they would be the group better able to afford cutting back hours. (Hochschild, 3). Aristotle would say that work in excessive amounts is less rewarding, and that it is hurting you and your family more than it is helping. The marginal benefit of working long hours and spending more time at the office decreases as you do it longer.

Segal also used Henry David Thoreau views on the simple life. Thoreau explained how “our necessities were few, yet we subject ourselves to endless labor” (Segal, 7). Thoreau states that once we have satisfied our necessities that then it is time to “adventure on life.” (Segal, 7). The people that Hochschild describes at Amerco are missing out on life by working these long hours. She describes the conclusion of this, “that work has become a form of ‘home’ and home has become a form of “work.” (Hochschild, 4). Segal would say that this is truly not living and that you will never reach self-fulfillment this way. The longer hours you spent at the office the more unrewarding your life becomes. We should not be slave-drivers of ourselves.

My experience has been that everything should be in moderation, and that too much a good thing can very well be a bad thing. Several years ago, I pursued the career of a Stockbroker, and it was the most unpleasant year of my life. Very similar to the workers at Amerco, I would devote all my time to my job. I was working 60-65 hours a week and coming in on the weekends as well. I never had time to spend with my family or friends. I rarely had fun. I did all this to try to pursue a successful career and to be very wealthy. But as Segal’s reading described I was hurting myself much more than helping it. I was denying myself the simple pleasures in life. I have since moved on to a different career in the business sector and have changed my outlook on becoming wealthy. In my new career, I make sure I have enough time for my family and friends. Similar to what Thoreau was stating, I was missing what was best in life, and now I have the opportunities to explore different arts, nature, and the meaning behind my life.

In conclusion, I feel that the people that Hochschild described should take time out of their busy work schedules and read Jerome M. Segal’s “Two Way of thinking About Money.” The writing by Segal will help the workers at Amerco realize what they are missing out on by spending a good majority of their time in the workplace. At such a young age, I have learned what is important in life, and that you can always find another job, but you only have one family. Segal’s writing only confirmed what I truly believe in, that life is more fulfilling when you sit back and enjoy it. The people that work these long hours will realize that they missed out on the true beauties of life, and it may be too late by that time.

Comments on Essay C: Score = 4 4 4 4

This essay addresses all parts of the writing assignment in generally clear language, following carefully the separate steps outlined in the assignment. Although this midrange paper could have demonstrated a stronger understanding of the Hochschild reading, the writer correctly summarizes key points in both readings, identifies references and makes appropriate connections between these readings and his own ideas.

Essay D

In his essay "Two Ways Of Thinking about Money", Jerome M. Segal states, that we should work for what we need. We should not excess over anything because excessive amount could harm us. Segal says that life is not all about money; there are others important things in life: Philosophy and Knowledge. The interest in getting more and more result in losing our personality. We became financially active and we forgot about natural things; things that come from our soul. Segal particular says that it is not about getting rich is about geeting a good life where you can live comfortable. Work for what you need "enough is plenty". We slaved our selves. We lose our freedom by working for more and more, and the more we have, the more we search for more, and the more we spent. It is better to have a simple life where we live according to our budget and enjoying natural things—that is Segal's opinion, and I agree with him.

In comparison to Segal's view Russell Hochschild estate in his/her essay "There's No Place like Work" that people are forgetting about natural things, and they are becoming slaves of their jobs. People are replacing home for work, it should be "there's no place like home", but unfortunately most of the people feel that way. They spent most of their time working and working. They just care about work, and they forget about family and adventure (have fun). Both essays illustrates how people are slaving themselves. Both authors (Segal and Russell told us the same message: the more we have the more we want "We all expect poorer new mothers to return to work more quickly after giving birth than rich mother. But among working women nationwide, well-to-do new mothers are not much more likely to stay home after 13 weeks with a new baby than low-income new mothers. Russell is telling us that the more women have the more they want, and they forgot about natural things (like being a mother) as Segal mentioned in his essay.

Arlie Russell Hochschild mainly discussed the lack of relationships and family affect. People care most about work, that they do about family. However, Jerome M. Segal is more concern about freedom, and spiritual beliefs. Segal is more worried about people making themselves slave of work and forgetting about natural things and a simple life, while Russell is more concern about family and home. But in conclusion they both agree that simple life is better.

I believe that both authors are right. Segal and Russell views about the role of money and work in our life are mainly the same as mine. I believe that simple life is better, and when you work too much you slave your self and lost some of your natural activities, and the more you have the more you want. I personally agree with this statement because now I am 22 years old, and this is my first time working. My salary is good, but now the more hours that I made the more hours that I want. I also see that the more I have , the more I spent. I feel like a slave of work and credit cards. I just work to pay my bills, and this is not good, we should work to have what we need and enjoy our lives. In summary, simple life is better "enough is plenty" life is short and we should live it with freedom and love.

Comments on Essay D: Score = 3 3 3 3

This essay does include some response to each part of the assignment and demonstrates generally accurate understanding of the readings. The writer also makes some appropriate connections between the readings and the writer's own ideas. However, repetition and lapses in language ("We should not excess over anything....") are somewhat distracting, explanations of the ideas are incomplete, and summaries of the readings are oversimplified.

Essay E

Money plays an important role in our life. Money can buy many goods, but not all of the things such as happiness, satisfaction. In my opinion, money is not the only thing we pursuit in our life. We have to use many ways to see money, to think about money.

According to the essay "Two ways of thinking about Money" by Jerome M. Segal, there are two different views for money, "more is better" and "just enough is plenty". Aristotle's challenge to a money-oriented of life still powerful today. Aristotle defined how people make a living. He discovered that postoral, farming, fishing, hunting and instestingly piracy can be maintain people's life, but these are limited amount. In addition, he discovered the unlimited amount of wealth can be made by retail trade, business, commerce. Aristotle also identified "external goods" such as wealth, property, power and reputation. But these elements can not satisfied with people's wants. Those external goods might make people spent excessive amount. To now, there are two different people: consumerism and materialism people spent their money for luxury goods. Excessive consumption occurs in the rich nation.

According to the essay "There's no place like work" by Arlie Russell Hochschild, there are many working people are struggling. Men and woman work outside, they are struggling for their family. Many woman likes to work outside. Although they have children, they still like to work more than stay at home. In 1993, there are 56% with children 6 to 17 and 43% with children under 6 get full time job. Woman doesn't want to stay home after they have new baby. Work can make them feel vauleable and satisfied. The policies of a special company which named "Amerco" is family friendly. If the workers head and supervisor agree, they can work part time or sharing job with their co-worker. But not all of the work likes to do that. Only fewer than 10% worker need to shorter their work time. Therefore, we can understand that people work in the office is not only for money. Also for their satisfaction.

Many best paid manager not interesting in part time job. People work in office can make them feel valuable. Also, woman do paid work can make them feel less depressed. They can get confident when they done a job.

Comparing to these two essay, they have a similar point: money is important but money can not buy all of things. Just like the essay "Two way of thinking about money", some people think "more is better" others are "enough is plenty". In our life, most people will think money is "more is better". But not really. People work are not only for money. They though they care about the amount of money. But the truth is they still need work to satisfied their soul. Although money can buy goods, but money can not buy the happiness.

In conclusion, people use money to satisfied their wants can not get happiness. Working people can use work to affirmation theirselves, can be self-fulfillment. Money is not the things we pursuit for our life, just thinking about the real life, we pursuit confident, satisfaction and happiness.

Comments on Essay E: Score = 2 2 2 2

This essay demonstrates partial understanding of both readings: the summary of Segal, for example, while mentioning Aristotle, leaves out the reading's emphasis on work (the assigned topic for the essay). Similarly, the writer appears to understand some parts of Hochschild, ("...people work in the office is not only for money. Also for their satisfaction."), but doesn't grasp her main idea that the roles of work and home have switched places in American society). Communication in this essay is inconsistent; there are frequent errors that impede comprehension.

Essay F

People in America are struggling between home and work. Some choose to go to work for pleasure and some work to support their family. Most of people do not have choice to stay home. In life, you cannot have what you need. There are lots of people who do not like to work because the type of job they doing is not in their interest or the pay is not much.

In America, there is a higher percentage of middle class families. Every family member tries their best so they can succeed in life. It is very tough to start from scratch and build your own career. A teenager goes to high school and still work part time. In this manner he can pay his personal expenses. Both the parents of the teenager works full time so they can give better education, food and protection to their children. Parents wants to give their children what they missed in their life.

If asked to anyone for going to work, most of them will say that work as a limit and after certain limit they would rather stay home and spend some time with their family. People should work according to the necessity of money. Every time has its own thing. The fact we are facing is that if you do not work hard then you would be left out.

In today's world we need to compete with world to make life easier. If you can reach for better why not go for it. Students in college work and study too in order to pay for personal expenses and school expenses. There are lots of single mothers who is supporting their childrens and working very hard. Every hard working families have their own dreams so they can live a better life. Most of the labor comes out from working families. If there were no working families then it would be very hard to stay in business. No body works by choice everyone are working for a reason and some are forced to work by their situation. America is the immigrant country where people come from all part of the world and support their family miles away. Step by step they work as they grow and fulfill their dreams.

There are families who end up with divorce or loosing their families because they push themselves a lot towards work and not at home. Work is not everything. Some women feel proud to work instead of staying home. These type of women proves that women are powerful too comparing to men or the house wives.

Talking about choice of working more or less in order to stay home. Everybody in our society needs to rethink about the system of working longer hours. It would be a lot better if we would have quality of life. This type of thinking will remain a dream if we keep on working lots of hours. There are loses and gains when we work a lot. Choice is ours so we can decide of our life.

The picture of America is money and nothing else is important than money. In conclusion I would say that man makes money rather than money makes man.

Comments on Essay F: Score = 1 1 1 4

This essay shows little ability to address the writing assignment, which clearly requires both discussion of the two readings *and* the writer's response to the topic: the role of work in a person's life. It may be that the writer has grasped something of the readings, but there are no direct references to either of the authors, no selections from the texts, and no comparative analysis of the readings. Although the sentence writing is generally understandable, the writer's failure to engage the assigned task accounts for the low score.