

Section A

Dear Assessment Committee,

I am definitely able to see my growth as a writer since arriving to Spelman College. After receiving back my first paper from Honors Composition last semester, I was not expecting the grading feedback that it displayed. While in high school, many of my papers received stellar marks which caused me to come to college with a confident perspective towards my writing capabilities. That evening, I called my mom to inform her of the critiques I was receiving from my first couple of papers of the course. After listening to me for a couple of minutes, my mother reminded me that I was now in college and the caliber of my writing was going to have to reflect this. From that point forward, I began to regain my confidence as an analytical writer. I am very appreciative that my first English instructor here at Spelman actively challenged me throughout the entire course. Without the constructive criticism that I received, I would have been content with my writing abilities and not allowed myself the opportunity to grow, mature, and improve as an author.

There are many writing skills that I have acquired here at Spelman with one of the main ones being integration of sources. With so many scholarly sources made easily accessible to us students via the internet, it is important that we know how to effectively extrapolate from these resources and effectively utilize them in our papers. I was able to gain this skill through the critical essays I have written for ADW. Formulating our own ideas from these sources and presenting these concepts in a clear and organized way to the reader is another important writing skill that I have learned. An individual's paper is able to have multiple wonderful ideas; however, if the ideas are not coherent with each other than the reader becomes confused and is not able to grasp the purpose of the work. Spelman emphasizes the importance of embracing

one's own thoughts and I have acquired this skill through the many dynamic conversations that occur on the campus. Organization is another key writing skill that I have learned. A writer should never discredit the importance of making an outline. Outlines provide one a clear sense of direction and focus for their respective paper to follow and allow the reader to seamlessly transition through their thoughts and ideas. My writing teacher last semester provided me with this skill with her detailed instructions on how to make an effective outline.

I chose my Section B essay because it is one of the first philosophy papers that I had ever composed. One main aspect of a philosophy paper is the ability of the writer to maintain a supported strong thesis statement throughout the entire paper. While composing this piece, I was forced to think outside of the box and create clear supporting points for my argument. This process allowed me to demonstrate my analytical skills as I had to formulate a counterargument as well. I had to think critically as an advocate for both sides of the issue in order to communicate with my reader why my viewpoint was the most rational. I chose my Section C essay because I worked very hard in composing this piece. My topic for this piece of handwriting in today's society was very interesting to me and I enjoyed conducting the research for this assignment. I believe that this piece demonstrates my ability to integrate my personality into my works. Because I was very passionate about my assigned topic, I had an easier time connecting with it which can be seen through the many personal experiences I allude to throughout the paper.

I chose the prompt I did for Section D because I believe it is a very relevant question that must be considered in today's society. Technology has revolutionized the ways in which we carry out day to day processes and its effects are relevant to study and observe in the education system. I believe it is important for us as students to give our perspective on the issue because

our generation has a different outlook on the effects of technology in comparison to our professors who did not grow up with the vast amount of technological resources we use today. I am used to essays being presented in this format and therefore did not have many problems with composing an essay of this structure. Being able to analyze a quote or viewpoint from a researcher or activist and choose a stance on that issue is a concept that I have been exposed to in high school and therefore I enjoy this abstract approach to writing prompts.

In the paper for Section D, I applied my ability to formulate an opinion and back that opinion up with clear detailed evidence that I learned from previous writing classes. I also applied my skill of finding pertinent sources from scholars who have already explored these topics and extracting meaningful quotes from the text that relate to my desired argument. From this essay, I learned that I am a very hands-on writer who likes to combine my own personal views, current world problems, and additional scholarly sources together to create a paper that is recent and relevant for the respective reader. I am a writer who wants to attract an intrigued audience and I display this through my writing style.

The piece that most engaged me as a writer was my Section C essay. This essay took me the longest to write and therefore caused me to have to dig deep and make connections with each one of my sources in order to create a coherent work. I didn't want to simply have four different paragraphs that talked about four different sources. Instead, my goal was to have the sources connect and draw upon one another in order to collaboratively convey my desired message.

Since coming to Spelman, I have realized that I need more work on expanding my vocabulary. Although I do believe that I demonstrate an extensive range of words in my papers, there are so many additional words that I want to add to my repertoire and I believe that I can improve in this area by continuing to be an avid reader. Furthermore, I would like to improve on

the organizational structure of my paper and will do this by creating outlines before I begin writing my major papers.

Writing is very relevant to me because I plan on attending law school in the future. As a lawyer, there is a specific way in which you are required to write and I know that the fundamental writing skills I am constantly building upon here at Spelman will constitute as the foundation for my further endeavors in this arena.

Sincerely,

Kristen Walker

Section B

Instructions: Write an essay with a clear thesis statement that relates The Communist Manifesto with the discussions we have had in class on the significance of money. The film we viewed in class *Born Rich* may be used as a reference.

Money that is Earned vs. Inherited

The American Dream has always been defined as the ability of any individual to immigrate to America and with a dedicated work ethic build a successful career and life for themselves and their family. Many families have been very fortunate in this pursuit by establishing themselves as some of the richest individuals in America and having the privilege to set aside trust funds for their family's future generation. After watching the film *Born Rich*, I realized that this lavish lifestyle is wonderful; however, there comes a point in time when you become so privileged in not having to work that you are unsure about your true purpose in life. In this paper, I will prove that money that is earned is much more valuable than money that is inherited and apply this concept to not only the film *Born Rich*, but to The Communist Manifesto by Marx and Engels as well.

The Communist Manifesto discusses the two different groups in society: the proletarians and bourgeois. The proletarians are defined as the working class group while the bourgeois include the small percent of the population who are rich and rule in the society. The Communists became upset with this small group of individuals continuously benefitting from the working classes' hard efforts. Thus, they wanted to create a society in which the proletarians ruled because "it has to feed its working class instead of being fed by it" (Marx). This principle coincides with the theme of money being inherited or worked for. The proletarians worked for their money and therefore, became frustrated when they were barely even getting a profit back

from their labor and instead having it distributed amongst the elite. One works in order to gain something in return and seeing the bourgeois have money handed to them became frustrating.

This concept can be compared to working hard for a scholarship. For many young children in school, going to college is a big step in their lives that more than likely will create a financial burden on their families. Keeping this in mind, many students who want to pursue higher education work hard throughout their years in elementary, middle, and high school in order to be competitive when applying for scholarships. The drive and work ethic motivating them to work to their greatest potential stems from their end goal of going to college. This case becomes unique for individuals who do not have to worry about the financial cost of college. For these children, working hard throughout school comes with a different motivation that may give them an intrinsic feeling of self-worth and pride but doesn't relate to money. The scholarship money that students work hard for and receive is more valuable than the money a rich student's parent dishes out of pocket for his child to attend school. When one knows they have the opportunity to engage in an activity, then their drive isn't exerted with the same level of passion.

Inherited wealth can not only lead to lack of motivation, but it can lead to a lost sense of purpose as well. Many people find their purpose by discovering their talents and then using these gifts to foster and aid the community and world as a whole. The goal for many is to work but have a sense of fulfillment and enjoyment while doing so. For those with inherited money, the urge to receive a job is not very pressing. During the documentary *Born Rich*, one of the characters asks a man what he should do being that he is very wealthy and doesn't need to get a job. The man responds, "Why would anyone in their right mind work unless they have to?" This question raises a pressing explanation because to me, a job is more than just money. A member of the working class may be quick to ask this question as someone who has to go into a 9-5 job

every day. However, one must think at a deeper level than a job only being a source of income. A job becomes a means to receiving personal fulfillment and satisfaction as well. A job allows an individual's passions, talents, and unique abilities to shine. When one doesn't have the opportunity to practice their gifts, they may become lost and question their very being.

This belief can be applied to the many professions in today's world. Many painters paint not only for the money, but for the joy it gives him/her to accurately capture moments in visual form. Many surgeons practice their stressful profession not only for the paycheck, but for their fascination with the intricacy of the human body. Many teachers passionately teach their students for the mere joy it gives them to give back to the community and play a role in aiding the future generation to succeed. This is not to say that money is not a factor in the reason why many individuals have a job; however, inherited money presents a lack of motivation for executing one's gifts and finding a job to give one a sense of intrinsic self-worth.

Money that is earned is worked for. Money that is inherited was gained by someone in your family line or one close to you. In this way, yes, the money is yours; however, it was not earned by you. In the movie, one of the characters who was a descendent from the Johnson and Johnson company noted that he was only a shareholder and wasn't allowed a part in the business because his grandfather believed in keeping family and business separate. The money was attached to his name but he had no true connection to it on a personal level.

When one works for their money, they take pride in the objects that they buy. Hard work allows one to take greater appreciation in their possessions. Inherited money is wonderful to receive however it isn't valued at the same level as money that is earned. It's similar to a teenager going shopping with their grandma. When the teenager knows that their grandmother is paying for all of the items that they buy, they are more extravagant in their selections and may

get items that they know they do not necessarily need but still find cute and fashionable. When going shopping by themselves however and having to use their own funds, they are more likely to only buy the crucial necessities. Therefore, money that is earned is taken at a greater value than money given to you.

Many of the individuals in the film *Born Rich* admired those before them who had worked hard and acquired loads of money and assets. From this one can see that the main individuals who earned the wealth take pride in their accomplishments. Those who inherit the money however, played no direct part in the work that went into receiving this vast amount of wealth. The only reason why they are receiving this inherited money is because they are connected by blood to the wealthy individual. In this way, those inheriting the money want to have the same sense of pride and achievement that the individual had. They still want to work in order to reach this same level of status and accomplishment. The money they inherited is wonderful; however, they feel as if now they have to prove and make a name for themselves as well.

One of the main reasons I believe that Communism has never worked in many countries is the belief that no one should be entitled to private property. In The Communist Manifesto, the concept of taking away all private property and turning it into social property is presented. In this way, all individuals will benefit from the land instead of a smaller more selective group controlling the majority of the ownership. The problem that lies in this is that when individuals do not receive their own property, there is no purpose behind hard work. If you know that everyone is going to benefit from your efforts, then your drive to putting forth your best work is weakened. Everyone in the society is not going to work at the same level of caliber as envisioned by the Communists and when an individual works for something, they expect to see benefits for

their labor. In a Communist society, one person doesn't have to work as hard as their neighbor to receive the same benefits and this raises many issues. Their motivation decreases as seen in individuals who inherit money.

One counterargument to the proposition of earned money being more valuable than inherited money is the fact that at the end of the day, money is still money. Whether or not the money is earned or inherited doesn't matter because it will still be used in the same manner. Furthermore, one might say that inherited money holds lots of value because it can be used as a stepping stool to get to the next level and receive a position in a field or career path that would be difficult to enter otherwise. To these critiques I would say that yes inherited money is still money; however, the manner in which you receive money is a product of one's drive, work ethic, and will to succeed.

Money isn't everything. Many of the individuals in the film *Born Rich* seemed lost and very confused. The fact that they could go out buy anything they wanted wasn't impressive to them and they all seemed to be searching for more in life. Members of our society, especially black males, have the focused mindset of simply grinding hard to make money. However, money honestly isn't everything. Earned money gives an individual a sense of pride and self-fulfillment while allowing them to utilize their gifts and talents in the process. One of the measures highlighted in The Communist Manifesto is the abolition of all right of inheritance. Although I do not believe this measure would be possible in today's society, I do understand the reasoning behind it. Each individual having to work for their funds allows them to find purpose in their life and enjoy all of the benefits that come with this dedication and drive to succeed giving it a heightened sense of value.

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Section C

Instructions:

For this last project, you will make a specific argument that responds to the research question you developed for Project #2 on technology's effect on education.

In other words: **What did you learn through your research, and what does your new knowledge enable you to say about college students, reading, and attention?**

Remember that a strong thesis must be clear, precise, arguable and complex.

Handwriting in Today's Society

While spending time at home over this Thanksgiving break, my six-year old sister Nicolette enthusiastically asked if she could write me a letter to put up in my dorm. The letter expressed how much she missed me and how happy she was for me to be coming home for the Christmas break. The letter ended with her signing her name in cursive and adding lots of hearts and smiley faces. After reading the note, I immediately noticed her cursive signature. I asked her who taught her how to write in cursive as she is only in the first grade. She responded that she had taught herself with the help of our mom and godmother. I was truly amazed and impressed by her drive to learn how to write in this script as the instruction of cursive is slowly declining. Whether it is through cursive or print, handwriting has always been a form of personal expression and idea development. However, with the rise of various sources of technology, one may question if its function is evolving daily in our lives. Computers, iPads, and cell phones have revolutionized not only the style in which we write, but the way we physically communicate as well. My six-year old sister made the conscious decision to learn how to write in cursive; however, all students do not possess this initiative. This paper will prove that even though the increase of keyboarding is prominent in today's world, print and cursive handwriting should still be taught in elementary school grades Kindergarten-5 throughout America.

In the scope of this paper, handwriting will be defined as the physical act of writing using one's hand. Cursive will be defined as a writing style characterized by joining all of the characters and only lifting the pencil from the paper between words. Keyboarding will be defined as typing by pressing down with the fingers on keys labeled with various letters on a keyboard to form words and sentences that communicate ideas. Although the expansion of technology has grown rapidly to include PDFs that can be written on, typed comments in the margins, styluses, and touch-screens that help bridge the gap between a personalized typed document and a written essay, the scope of this paper will focus on technology's role in handwriting as defined through keyboarding.

As noted earlier, with cursive being eliminated from the core curriculum, there has been a significant decline in students actively practicing the technique (Zubrzycki). I am reminded of the day I sat in my high school classroom preparing to take the SAT. After filling in all of the proper bubbles used for identifying our name, address, and phone number, the last part included writing the confidentiality statement in cursive. As soon as my teacher stated this final portion, multiple students raised their hands to tell the teacher that they did not know how to write in cursive and did not know how they would complete this section of the exam. It was very surprising to me that many of my peers had lacked the instruction of this fundamental skill. Possessing the ability to write in cursive allows one to accurately sign their name on important documents as well as the aptitude to read old recipes, documents, notes, and further manuscripts. With the lack of cursive instruction in today's world, students aren't able to correctly perform these necessary tasks. It has been noted that many students tend to blend the two styles of handwriting and cursive in order to create a quicker font (Zubrzycki). This reinforces the notion that as human beings, we are always trying to discover the most effective ways in which to

communicate. By teaching both styles, one is ensuring that students are able to write in the way that is most beneficial and efficient for them.

In today's world, instead of being given a crayon and piece of paper, parents will instead give their toddler an iPad or smart phone to play on. These electronic devices have coloring apps, cartoon games, and movies to keep the young child occupied. However, are these devices aiding in their physical and cognitive development? In the research article concerning handwriting in early education written by Laura Dinehart, she states, "more intentional scribbles contain some of the universal features of writing including directionality and linearity" (Dinehart 99). From this quote one can see that these early scribbles serve as the foundational steps that precede handwriting development. The processes that aid in cognitive and motor skills develop much earlier in younger children than do keyboarding skills. While the ideal age for a child to learn keyboarding occurs in the 10-12 age range, handwriting skills are fostered in the 5-7 age range (Stevenson and Just 51). Handwriting skills being reinforced at a young age allows the child to receive a crucial foundation that they are able to further build upon (Dinehart 100). This is why it is advised that a coloring book or writing journal still be given to children to occupy their time as it has been proven that when a child begins demonstrating excellent handwriting skills at a young age, they will most likely have an easier time with learning the proper typing skills when they become older (Stevenson and Just 52).

Fine motor skills are another key element that handwriting develops. For example, the way a child holds their pencil and the legibility of their letters will properly improve over time with continued practice and reinforcement (Dinehart 101). The various stages of letter identification, stroke sequence, and tracing letters all lead up to motor memory and speed from the 5-7 age range of the average student (Stevenson and Just 51). The instruction of handwriting

ensures that students receive these crucial motor skills in a direct, concise, and organized manner. Vision, hearing, and touch are all motor skills that handwriting aids with and its removal from the school settings would come with an even greater number of unforeseen challenges than valuable benefits (Stevenson and Just 54).

Motor memory is another key fine motor skill that handwriting reinforces. When older individuals survive strokes, therapists will have them trace over letters to help with memory recognition (Zubrzycki). From this, one can observe that the processes that a child experiences while learning how to write are crucial for their physical and cognitive processes when they become older (Chemin). Handwriting is not simply a tool that one utilizes when they are in school, but rather essential in all facets of life. Current school systems may not pay much attention to how handwriting plays a key role in the motor development and muscle memory of children; however, if the ability to write in print and cursive is not taught, then these important and significant fundamental skills can not be reinforced from typing as typing does not ensure the development of these same attributes.

Handwriting is also an indicator of academic achievement in the classroom setting. Teachers tend to give higher marks to students with “work they find ‘easy’ to read” (Dinehart 102). Therefore, one can see that those students with excellent and neat handwriting have a higher sense of self confidence and reassurance in their work because they tend to receive better grades. In a specific study, it was noted that when typed essays were reviewed, they were evaluated as being two years behind developmentally than the written essays (Dinehart 106). Furthermore, in many situations, teachers are able to evaluate the reading and math levels of their students by simply observing their fine motor writing skills (Dinehart 106). This demonstrates that with the proper handwriting training, the success in other subjects throughout

the student's matriculation will result as well. In a study comparing handwritten vs. typed notes, those students who had written the notes from a lecture by hand answered more of the comprehension questions correctly than the students with typed notes (Chemin). This indicates that handwriting leads to rephrasing rather than rewriting. The students actively listened and were able to write the important facts into their own individual interpretations. Those students with typed notes simply rewrote what was said instead of actively making further connections. Handwriting helps to engage facets of our brain that contribute to a deeper comprehension and engagement of academic material.

There is a coherent connection between the benefits of handwriting in emotional and mental progression. Handwriting unveils emotional and personal characteristics that allow for individuality, creativity, and a sense of self-confidence. During the 20th century, mental disabilities were detected by observing how individuals wrote (Chemin). Although at times these observations were proven to be false and inaccurate, this does indicate a link between one's handwriting and their personality and individual character traits. Keyboarding does not reveal these traits in the same manner. When one handwrites, they are able to create a form that is unknown by any software. Although many PDF and word documents have places where one can type in the margin, handwriting allows you to write at whichever angle or viewpoint is needed to communicate one's ideas. Furthermore, all of the work that you have crossed out or restructured is exhibited on the same page and not discarded similar to computer documents. This allows one to view their whole thought process, mistakes, and progression as they each develop their respective papers.

Handwriting is also a means of creative expression. To me, it is truly a form of artwork. There are no two individuals whose handwriting will ever be exactly the same and each

individualized style becomes personal. Just as paintbrushes, pastels, crayons, and markers swirl around a canvas to create a masterpiece, the handwritten manuscript of each person is a unique mark on paper that further demonstrates who they are as an individual. These individual differences are what diversify us as a group of people. With typing, the same movement is performed no matter the letter. There is something about a note that one receives in his or her mailbox that differs from an emailed thank you note. A handwritten note indicates that one took the time out of their day to find a nice card, write a note, and then go through the hassle of going to the post office to mail it. Although keyboarding may be a faster way to communicate, it does not exude the same heart-warming sentiment that handwriting brings. Without the personal marks from these handwritten sources, one loses this personal connection as keyboarding only allows for predetermined computer generated fonts and forms to be used from the writer.

It is important to discuss the commonalities between typing and handwriting in order to accentuate why the discussion of the two together is an ongoing concern. Many teachers believe that they are unprepared to properly teach both handwriting and keyboarding skills (Stevenson and Just 53). Although teachers may feel that print and cursive handwriting are crucial, if they aren't receiving adequate instruction to teach these skills, then there is a lack of coherent unity in the demonstration of these skills by children in different areas across the country and a lack for the drive of its enforcement. It is also important for there to be a consistent handwriting curricula and keyboarding program that is used to effectively instruct children as this will lead to further progression (Stevenson and Just 52). Local governments play a key role in the specific curriculum revolving keyboarding and handwriting that will be included in their specific school district (Zubrzycki). This explains why certain school districts produce students with better handwriting and keyboarding skills than others. With the lack of consistency in reinforcement to

students across the country, some groups will constantly receive significant advantages or disadvantages than others. In order for the instruction of both handwriting and keyboarding to be effective, there must be a consensus on the curriculum and teacher preparation on a local and national level.

While investigating this topic, one can make the counterargument that with computers, laptops, tablets, and iPads taking over the way children learn in the current education system, legible handwriting may not be an effective communication tool in today's world. Chemin alludes to this when she states, "what really matters is not how we produce a text, but its quality." She believes that the technique in which we write does not matter but rather the value of the message. I wonder how much validity can be given to this statement as most individuals have a different experience when using the two techniques. Although keyboarding may be considered the more "innovative and up-to-date process" of the two, handwriting remains more complex as one has to physically learn the shape of each letter while keyboarding only emphasizes knowing where the keys are located on the keyboard. Furthermore, handwriting is also more reliable as computers and other electronic devices are easily broken or faced with technical difficulties. Although keyboarding does aid in motor skill development and increased legibility, its function and form is implemented and shaped in a different way (Stevenson and Just 53).

In conclusion, with the rise of technology, the importance and significance of handwriting has begun to change. It can be said that with the rise of technological devices, when one does not demonstrate computer-based skills, they are at a disadvantage in this world. Agendas and planner books in which you write notes in are becoming rare as many people simply type their schedule and to-do list into their reminders, notes, or calendar app on their

phones. Instead of writing and turning in papers by hand, many teachers prefer that students type their work to hand in. Handwriting aids in the development of motor skills, reading comprehension, memory recognition, and idea formation and creativity. Integrating technology into the teaching of handwriting and finding out how the two can be used in conjunction with one another may be a way to bridge the gap between handwriting and keyboarding. Dinehart alludes to this when she writes that teachers should “provide a balance of activities that allow children to engage in authentic interactions.” This engagement and balance between handwriting and typing will help strengthen both techniques in the classroom setting. As a college student who has matriculated through the public school system and remembers when handwriting was an individual subject, I believe that handwriting continues to be a fundamental skill that should never cease to be taught. Learning the formation of letters is a trait that many of us do not remember learning; however, it continues to be and always will be a fundamental part of our very being. Therefore, ensuring the continuation of its instruction will lead to a future generation of students, similar to my six-year old sister Nicolette, who are actively engaged and cognizant of the power behind a pencil and paper.

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