English II Writing

Persuasive Scoring Guide
April 2013
Read the following quotation.

What I like about cities is that everything is king-size, the beauty and the ugliness. —Joseph Brodsky

Although large cities are exciting places to live, small towns have their own special characteristics. Think carefully about this idea.

Write an essay stating your position on whether it is better to live in a large city or in a small town.

Be sure to —

• state your position clearly
• use appropriate organization
• provide specific support for your argument
• choose your words carefully
• edit your writing for grammar, mechanics, and spelling
Score Point 3

The essay represents a satisfactory writing performance.

Organization/Progression

- The organizing structure of the essay is, for the most part, appropriate to the purpose and responsive to the specific demands of the prompt. The essay is clear because the writer uses organizational strategies that are adequately suited to the persuasive task.

- The writer establishes a clear position. Most ideas are related to the position and are focused on the issue specified in the prompt. The essay is coherent, though it may not always be unified due to minor lapses in focus.

- The writer’s progression of ideas is generally logical and controlled. For the most part, transitions are meaningful, and sentence-to-sentence connections are sufficient to support the flow of the essay and show the relationships among ideas.

Development of Ideas

- The development of ideas is sufficient. The argument is largely convincing because the reasons and evidence the writer uses to support the position are specific and appropriate.

- The essay reflects some thoughtfulness. The writer’s response to the prompt is original rather than formulaic. The writer develops the essay in a manner that demonstrates a good understanding of the persuasive writing task.

Use of Language/Conventions

- The writer’s word choice is, for the most part, clear and specific. It reflects an awareness of the persuasive purpose and establishes a tone appropriate to the task. Word choice usually contributes to the quality and clarity of the essay.

- Sentences are reasonably varied and adequately controlled, contributing for the most part to the effectiveness of the essay.

- The writer demonstrates an adequate command of sentence boundaries and spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and usage conventions. Although some errors may be evident, they create few (if any) disruptions in the fluency of the writing, and they do not affect the clarity of the essay.
Score Point 3
In this satisfactory essay, the writer establishes the position that he would personally prefer to live in a small town, even though there are valid points to living in a large city or a smaller town. Taking a qualified position is a valid approach to the persuasive task and is considered responsive to the prompt. The writer uses specific and appropriate reasons to contrast the “sense of community” in a small town to the “transfusion of ideas” in a large city. Although the writer moves back and forth between discussing the positives and negatives of a small town versus those of a large city, the progression of ideas is generally logical and controlled because the sentence-to-sentence connections are sufficient to support the flow of the essay. Specific word choice helps to establish an appropriate tone and contributes to the quality and clarity of the essay. In addition, the writer’s control of conventions also strengthens the essay’s effectiveness.
It's better to live in a big city because opportunities are endless in the career you want to pursue. For example, in the movie Coyote Ugly, the main character leaves her small town to pursue her career as a singer. She leaves to New York. While there, she finds out that getting her career started is harder than what she had imagined. Eventually, she gets a job at a local bar as a singer. It wasn't what she had hoped for, but it was an opportunity she wouldn't have received in her small town.

Another example is the show Dance Academy. Tania, the main character, wants to be a professional ballerina. This dream is bigger than the population of her small town so she auditions for the Dance Academy in the capital of Australia. They accept her and she leaves her small town. The opportunities in the big city make her dream of a career in dance one step closer.

In conclusion living in a big city is better because opportunities are available for whatever career you want to achieve. Whether it's being a singer, dancer, CEO, actress, athlete, or engineer the opportunities are endless.

Score Point 3
The writer immediately establishes a clear position that a big city provides the best career opportunities. The writer supports her position with appropriate examples taken from a movie and a television show. Both examples feature characters that relocate to big cities in search of careers in the arts. Although the writer’s synopsis of what happens to each character shows that the opportunity would not have been available in a small town, the overall development of her body paragraphs could be more specific (it was an opportunity she wouldn’t have received in her small town; the big city makes her dream of a career in dance one step closer). Overall, the strong focus, the controlled progression of ideas, and the good command of conventions outweigh the somewhat general development in this satisfactory writing performance.
when you watch movies or read books, many a
times, the setting is a quaint, small town where
everyone knows one another. But, is this always
preferable? A small town can make you feel trapped
and confined, while larger cities can make you feel
like a fish in an ocean, rather than a pond.
Small towns can be rather charming to many,
but larger cities can be bustling with excitement
and energy. Wonderful examples of this would
be New York City or Las Vegas, cities that never
sleep. There always seems to be something exciting to do.
Larger cities also imply greater populations. Here
people mean that things will not always be routine,
there will always be a chance of meeting someone
new, no matter where you go.
In small towns, things can get old; you can
feel as though you’re in a rut you cannot side step.
The way that your small town’s life is may be vastly
different from the rest of the world, making you a
complete novice once you step foot somewhere else.
Big metropoles can be exciting and lively
with every passing day there. While small towns
have a charm of their own, larger cities just offer
too much to resist.

Score Point 3
In this satisfactory writing performance, the writer states her position in the last sentence of
the essay, although it is clear from the very beginning that she greatly prefers larger cities
over small towns. The development of ideas is narrowly focused on the ways in which “cities
can make you feel like a fish in an ocean rather than a pond.” The writer’s approach to the
prompt is thoughtful and original. Through her descriptive word choice, the writer
encourages the reader (using the universal “you”) to consider the opportunities of life in a big
city versus the stagnancy of life in a small town. In addition, the sentences are reasonably
varied and controlled, and the conventions are good.
Big cities and small towns differ greatly. The rules are different, the things to do are different, and the people are different. I came from a small town of about 7,000 people, and I'd have to say it is so much better than living in a big city.

Big cities are crowded, there seems to be no open spaces. Yeah, they’re fun to visit every now and then, but they get old quick. From the traffic jams to waiting in line for everything, it can cause great frustration and mental problems. It's sad that the people and kids that grew up in a big city never really get the chance to see how it is otherwise.

Now small towns on the other hand have many open spaces and isn't crowded for the most part. You don’t have to wait in line much at all. The downside is there might not be as much to do in a big city, but the hospitality and citizenship makes up for that part. Everybody knows everybody in a small town; now that might not be good all the time but it's better to most people. The atmosphere is just so much cleaner and nicer in a small town.

If you live in the city I highly encourage you to visit a small town and see how it is. You never know it might change you. I think you've truly missing out. The small towns are for me.

Score Point 3
The writer of this satisfactory essay establishes the clear position that small towns are better than big cities. He uses a compare/contrast organizational strategy to focus on the negatives of living in cities (paragraph two) versus the positives of living in small towns (paragraph three). Within each body paragraph, the writer moves quickly from idea to idea, and the flow of the essay from sentence to sentence is not always seamless. However, the argument is largely convincing because the writer uses appropriate reasons and evidence. Specific word choice helps the writer establish a consistent persuasive tone, which contributes to the quality of the essay.
Score Point 4

The essay represents an accomplished writing performance.

Organization/Progression

- The organizing structure of the essay is clearly appropriate to the purpose and responsive to the specific demands of the prompt. The essay is skillfully crafted because the writer uses organizational strategies that are particularly well suited to the persuasive task.

- The writer establishes a clear position. All ideas are strongly related to the position and are focused on the issue specified in the prompt. By sustaining this focus, the writer is able to create an essay that is unified and coherent.

- The writer’s progression of ideas is logical and well controlled. Meaningful transitions and strong sentence-to-sentence connections enhance the flow of the essay by clearly showing the relationships among ideas, making the writer’s train of thought easy to follow.

Development of Ideas

- The development of ideas is highly effective. The argument is forceful and convincing because the reasons and evidence the writer uses to support the position are specific and well chosen.

- The essay is thoughtful and engaging. The writer may choose to recognize the complexities of the issue, consider opposing or alternate points of view, use his/her unique experiences or view of the world as a basis for writing, or connect ideas in interesting ways. The writer develops the essay in a manner that demonstrates a thorough understanding of the persuasive writing task.

Use of Language/Conventions

- The writer’s word choice is purposeful and precise. It reflects a keen awareness of the persuasive purpose and maintains a tone appropriate to the task. Word choice strongly contributes to the quality and clarity of the essay.

- Sentences are purposeful, varied, and well controlled, enhancing the effectiveness of the essay.

- The writer demonstrates a consistent command of sentence boundaries and spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and usage conventions. Although minor errors may be evident, they do not detract from the fluency of the writing or the clarity of the essay. The overall strength of the conventions contributes to the effectiveness of the essay.
Having lived in both a large city in Texas and a village in rural Ireland, I can see arguments for both. While I may miss the beauty and peace of country life, comforts afforded by more metropolitan areas are difficult to ignore.

For example, I no longer have to drive an hour to get to the nearest department store or emergency care. Most of what I want and everything I need is at my fingertips in the city. My family owns a ranch near Johnson City (not a city at all), and we occasionally go there for a weekend, but it is always a slight relief to return in to range of a cell signal. Being in the city feels more connected, more current, and in my opinion better for someone my age.

Teenagers in my little Irish village were always troubled. You can only go to the corner store so many times, or play so many games of street soccer, before it starts to get old. Living in Austin, which is effectively Boston to Loughgall, all the fun in the world is a short drive away. From my house, I can walk to three parks, a library, a bakery, two toy shops and most of my friends’ houses. Places I want to go are always right at hand.

Though I have experience with both, I’d have to say that city life is more comfortable and interesting for a person of my age than living in a rural area. There are many places to go and things to see in Austin, and I am located within arms-reach of all the necessary goods and services.

Score Point 4
The writer clearly establishes the position that “city life is more comfortable and interesting for a person [her] age than living in a rural area.” She organizes her argument by juxtaposing the conveniences of urban living in Austin with the isolation of rural life (both on her family’s ranch and in Ireland). The argument is convincing because the writer uses her own unique experiences to effectively show why living in a city is more fun and interesting than life in a rural village. In addition, the writer uses meaningful transitions to “build” the argument from paragraph to paragraph, adding depth and making her train of thought easy to follow. A consistent command of conventions and well-controlled sentences contribute to the effectiveness of this accomplished essay.
Would you rather live in a big city or a small town? That is kind of like asking whether you would rather be overwhelmed and swallowed up by where you reside, or if you want to be a part of something where you live. It is better to live in a small town where you can actually know and love the people and places around you.

Living in a small town is simply better than being in a big city. In a small town, you actually get to meet and know the people around you. If everyone is close, then everyone cares about each other too. For example, in a big city, people don’t care about going to others’ parades or sporting events. While in a small town, everyone will go to a baseball game on Friday night and everyone can cheer on the team by name. It is also not as busy. People can lay back and really enjoy their home.

City residents believe that living in a chaotic and crowded place is a good place to be because all your malls, diners, and grocery stores are right there. Unfortunately, these people don’t realize what they’re missing. They walk by people everyday and don’t even know their names or what they do. Also, city parents will send their kids to school where they will be in a class of twenty five to thirty, while the small town people have about fifteen and they know their teachers personally. So it’s clear that small towns are a better option.

Obviously, it is better to be in a small town where you feel like you’re cared about and loved. Maybe you should sell that condo you have in the city and instead move to a nice neighborhood in a small town.
I've had the benefit of experiencing both a large city and a small town. If given a choice between the two, hands down I'd choose the city any day. Big cities provide invaluable opportunities that small towns can't match to any degree.

In cities there is always something to do. When boredom attacks, a person is never very far from some sort of park/movie theater/diner/something to waste time. The mass of things around you in a city is great. You can always rely on a city to give you what you want. In a small town you can barely rely on a grocery store to supply decent out-of-season fruit.

The people are the seller, though. In a city you meet more people in a lifetime than you could ever count. Each one different too. Mean, nice, old, young, interesting, dull - they each teach you a little something about the world and they each teach you a little more about yourself. I didn't know how much I valued books until a man on a bus challenged their worth. That interaction taught me about a new side of life.

Small towns have this supposed "charm," but I think cities have a charm - a better charm - all of their own. They're a place to enjoy yourself and bask in the glory of life and all it entails.
Would you rather have thousands of bouquets of weeds or one single beautiful blooming red rose? Just like a city can give you more quantity of something like the bouquets, a small town presents more of the beauty of this world like the rose. By living in a small town, you experience so many wonders and joys that the city can’t offer.

Outside the window of a skyscraper, you capture the view of the traffic-jammed street, the people rushing by, the store signs everywhere. You experience the excitement man creates. From the view out of a small town window you experience the awe-striking beauty nature creates. The sun peaks out of the glorious white clouds and spreads its golden light on the tall fields and fields of grain. Everything is still and calm with only the occasional car driving into the only grocery store in town. The High school students walk to school, greeting each other with a smile and high five as they pass each other.

Why is life better in a small town? It shows you the true value of life. It presents friendships to you that grew each day. It creates a sense of home and belonging. It gives you the opportunity to create a world that you yourself can control. It allows you to appreciate the natural things that you cannot create nor destroy.

Living in a small town benefits you more because it opens up the importance of life unlike the city that blinds you into getting wrapped up with unnecessary situations. It gives you a rose in your life and takes away the weeds.

Score Point 4

In this accomplished writing performance, the student asserts that living in a small town offers more wonders and joy than living in a city. The writer supports this position by using an analogy, comparing the difference between cities and towns to the difference between a bouquet of weeds and a single rose. The essay is thoughtful and engaging because the writer connects ideas in interesting ways. For example, in paragraph two, she contrasts the “excitement man creates” in cities to the “beauty nature creates” in small towns. In paragraph three, she argues that the friendships and sense of belonging found in a small town create a world that people themselves can control. Purposeful sentences and strong conventions contribute to the overall effectiveness of the essay.