



**Middle School
Persuasive/Argumentative
Prompt Catalog**

Middle School Persuasive/Argumentative Prompt Catalog

Below each prompt title is the number of sources. Zeros denote prompts that are not research or source dependent. Zeros also indicate when the number of sources is unknown or unspecified (i.e., recommends but does not require sources, or requires research by the student (and/or teacher)).

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The Editor's Note provides an overview of the content for this catalog and brief descriptions of the index and appendices included herein.

Editor's Note

Statement of Purpose and Alignment

This catalog provides a list of all of the Persuasive/Argumentative prompts that are currently active in MY Access!® and available for use at the Middle School level. Each prompt aligns to Common Core and State educational standards and assessment practices expected of Middle School students for the Persuasive and Argumentative writing genres. All prompts also align to the educational standards outlined in our rubrics and writing genres, which in turn align to the National and State education standards. Each genre was re-evaluated and updated in accordance with current academic standards and practices to better serve teachers and students. As a result of this and the MY Access!® redesign, several prompts previously found in other genres have been moved to account for these shifts in educational standards and to provide a more accurate representation of the prompts in the system. Please refer to the list of migrated prompts available in the MY Access!® Resource and Training Center to locate prompts that recently moved to other genres, or contact our staff for further assistance in locating specific prompts in the system.

Catalog Overview

The catalog provides an overview of each prompt in the system. Each catalog entry provides the title of the prompt and the text of the prompt task. The catalog entry only includes the prompt task and basic data related to the prompt. Sources and our in-house specific genre-based prompt instructions are not included. These are accessible in the system for each prompt. However, wherever possible and if applicable, a list of source titles, authors, and data are provided for each prompt entry.

Lexile level data provides a basic reference for the textual complexity levels found in particular sources. This data features in each prompt entry as both a range (from lowest to highest level, or approximate level, for a prompt's sources) and a specific value (if known or available). Only text-based sources include a Lexile level. Any multimedia source, such as a video, audio clip, map, or chart, will feature a Lexile reading of 'N/A' in the system for 'not applicable.' Teachers are encouraged to perform their own assessment of any Lexile levels provided for sources and to assess each prompt to ensure the content is appropriate for your students. All genres include prompts with and without sources. The quantity and complexity of sources varies according to education standards in each grade band.

However, some prompts may be more rigorous than others due to changing academic standards and particular task requirements. Generally, the MY Access!® Persuasive/Argumentative genre for the Middle School level requires more in-

depth analysis, research, and more advanced argumentative writing and reasoning skills. The genre can incorporate prompts that may require students to formulate and express an opinion about a topic, although this occurs more in the lower grade levels, or create a persuasive argument in response to a topic or issue. Likewise, prompt tasks may require creating a formal analytical argument based on empirical evidence from research using primary and secondary sources in multiple mediums. These are more common at the Middle School level. Other prompts may require or recommend integrating relevant in-depth research from sources about a topic into a student's argument, which will be either persuasive or argumentative in nature. Opinion, persuasive argument, and analytical argument writing are simply examples of the most common types of tasks seen in the Persuasive/Argumentative genre in MY Access!®.

A Note about Sources

Most argumentative tasks require close reading and analysis of sources, primarily works of non-fiction. Students base the bulk of their argument on their close reading of sources. Tasks may require students to identify, discuss, and/or apply applicable terms, techniques, and strategies relevant to persuasive and/or argumentative writing to their persuasive or analytical argument. The quantity, quality, and depth of persuasive or analytical argument required of students varies in accordance with education standards for each grade band level.

The catalog lists details about the sources for a particular prompt when known. Sources are considered unknown when a prompt only recommends rather than requires particular sources, or requires students (and/or teachers) to research and provide their own sources. In these cases, a prompt will list a zero as the number of sources. However, this does not necessarily mean the prompt does not include, require, or recommend sources. It merely means the actual source number is unknown or specific sources are not provided. Sometimes a zero source number does simply mean the prompt does not require, need, or provide sources. Some prompts specify a required number of sources to use, while others do not. Each prompt entry in the catalog records the number of sources (if known), Lexile levels (if applicable and/or known), source titles and authors, and notes pertaining to the types of sources used in the prompt. Each Table of Contents entry includes the title of a prompt, whether it is IntelliMetric™ or Pilot, and the number of sources. Source notes provide explanation as to why certain sources were not included directly in the prompt, most often due to copyright regulations and/or length of the source. Other source notes specify if a prompt is source-based, quotation-based, or research-based. Quotations, even if integrated into the prompt task as a stepping off point, are included in the catalog as a source.



Index and Appendices

New features in the catalogs include the Index and Appendices section found at the end of each catalog. The purpose of these sections is to provide a list of prompt titles at a glance that are specifically source-based, quotation-based, and research-based, as well as a list of titles for prompts that do not require sources or evidence-based research. New features are planned for subsequent publications of the catalogs to make viewing and accessing prompts easier for teachers.



IntelliMetric™ Prompts

A Four-Day School Week

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Recently, a school district in Pennsylvania became the first in the state to change the traditional school schedule from a five-day week to a four-day week. This change is intended to save the school district money, but it may cost parents and students money and opportunities in the long run. All of the students in your class have heard this news. Some are thrilled; however, some believe that this change will have a negative impact on learning and extracurricular activities.

In a well-developed, multi-paragraph essay, state your position on this issue and then persuade your fellow classmates to join you in a call to action to either shorten your school week to four days, or to keep the five-day school week. You must provide compelling reasons for your argument, and address and rebut the counterarguments. Be sure to include facts, statistics, or any other relevant information to strengthen your view on this issue.

A Letter to Isabella and Ferdinand

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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In 1492, when Christopher Columbus needed funding for his risky voyage in search of a western trade route to the Orient, he wrote a letter to Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand in order to persuade the Spanish monarchs to sponsor his voyage. Later, Columbus accidentally sailed right into the New World.

Imagine that you are Columbus and find yourself in need of money to fund your uncertain venture across the Atlantic Ocean. Write a persuasive letter to Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand in which you make the case for your voyage. How will this voyage benefit Spain? What do you hope to achieve?

A Manned Mission to Mars

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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In the next few years, the United States plans to launch a manned spaceship to Mars to establish a human colony there. While some observers argue that such a mission is necessary for human knowledge to advance, others fear that the costs of such a

mission are too high or that it may not even be possible with our present technology. Do you think this is a wise course of action or not?

Write a letter to the President of the United States that expresses your opinion of whether the United States should proceed with this course of action.

Important facts that may be relevant to your argument:

- The United States has sent several unmanned missions to Mars. With our present technology, it takes approximately nine months to reach Mars. As of 2005, the estimated cost of a manned mission to Mars is approximately 20 billion dollars.
- Mars is about half the size of the Earth. Its atmosphere contains no oxygen. It does, however, contain carbon dioxide.
- There is no liquid water on Mars today. However, there is abundant frozen water (ice) on the planet's surface. There is also evidence that the surface of Mars once contained oceans of water.
- It is currently unknown if Mars ever supported life.

Acting Courageous or Seeking Thrills?

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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What is courage? How is being courageous different from being a thrill-seeker? What activities do or do not require courage?

After reading the teacher assigned texts on different forms of courage, write an argumentative essay on the qualities that contribute to a courageous person and action. Be sure to acknowledge competing views of courage, and support your position with evidence from the assigned texts.

American Victory in the Revolutionary War

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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How were the American patriots able to claim victory over England in the Revolutionary War?

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you analyze the war and defend your reasons for the colonists' victory. Be sure to cite reliable sources to support your argument.

An Electronic Tablet Device for Each Student?

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Over the past decade, access to technology has flourished. As a result, popular personal electronic tablet devices are now seen as useful educational tools. In a multi-paragraph argumentative essay, construct a response that states and supports your position on schools purchasing an electronic tablet device for each student to use in the classroom and at home.

An Environmental Problem - HB Unit 4 Level A

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Write a 3-paragraph article for your community newspaper. Tell about an environmental problem and persuade readers to solve it through a team effort. Present your ideas for solving the problem.

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An Important Issue - HB Unit 5 Level B

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Write a letter to the editor. Tell about a topic that is important to you. State your position and give arguments to convince your readers to take action.

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Animal Abuse Laws

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Many citizens believe that America's animal cruelty laws are not tough enough and that people who participate in illegal animal fighting or other forms of animal abuse should be treated in the same manner as those who abuse humans. Do you believe that the consequences for severe animal abuse should be the same as for human abuse?

In a well-developed essay, articulate your position on this issue. Be sure to provide specific reasons and examples to support your argument.

Animal Testing

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Cosmetic and drug companies continually face opposition due to the fact that they use animals for the testing of their products. Some feel that this procedure goes against the rights which are given to all living beings, including animals, while others see the positive impact that animal testing brings to the lives of human beings.

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you state and defend your position. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

Argue For or Against Group Projects

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Many teachers assign group projects. Sometimes, however, an uncooperative member can affect the entire group. Argue for or against the use of group projects using specific details and examples.

Assimilation into a New Culture

Prompt Source(s):	1	Source Lexile Range:	700L-800L
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Source One:	Excerpt from “The Chinese in All of Us: A Mexican American Explores Multiculturalism” By Richard Rodriguez, from <i>Miss Rockwell’s English</i> site, provided courtesy of the Pennsbury School District and Miss Rockwell, an English teacher of Pennsbury High School
Source Lexile Level:	700L-800L

[Click here to view the source\(s\) for this prompt.](#)

After reading Richard Rodriguez’s article “The Chinese in All of Us,” think about the difficulties encountered by school-age immigrants. Rodriguez believes that immigrants inevitably need to assimilate into the new culture they become a part of, which makes it increasingly difficult to maintain one’s own heritage, culture, and traditions.

In a multi-paragraph essay, argue whether you agree or disagree with Rodriguez’s position. Include evidence from his writing to support your position.

Studies have shown that people who take short breaks throughout the day to do light, outdoor exercise are more productive than those who do not. Use specific details and examples to convince your principal whether students should have similar breaks during the school day.

Celebrity Role Models

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Since celebrities are constantly in the public eye, there is a debate over what their responsibilities as role models should be. Many celebrities have stated that they do not believe they should be viewed as role models, while others have argued that it is their responsibility to use their celebrity status to raise awareness for many social issues.

In a well-developed essay, explain your position on the responsibility of celebrities to act as role models. Use examples to support your position.

Cell Phones in School

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Many schools restrict students from using their cell phones during school hours. Teachers and administrators have concerns that students will use their phones dishonestly or inappropriately. Write a letter to your school principal convincing him or her that students should be allowed to use cell phones during school hours. Use facts and examples to support your position.

Choosing an Exotic Pet

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Have you ever thought about owning a really unusual pet? Some people love having an exotic pet to show off to their friends, while others think owning an exotic pet makes them special. An exotic pet might be an iguana, a gecko, a coatimundi, a serval, a kinkajou, a llama, or even a chimpanzee! There are many unique pets to consider.

When you become a pet owner, you must consider how to care for your exotic pet. What do they eat? What do they need to be comfortable in your home? Are they dangerous? Will you need to protect your family or friends? You also have to think about how much it costs to keep an exotic pet.

Research an exotic pet, then develop an argument and write a multi-paragraph essay either persuading your parents to allow you to purchase an exotic pet, or convincing them it is not a good idea. Be sure to include facts and details from your research to support your argument and counterarguments.

Differences between Athens and Sparta

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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The city-states of Athens and Sparta had different sets of values underlying their societies. Although they were both located in the Peloponnesian Peninsula and shared language and religion, each was characterized by differences in education, daily life, and government. Each city-state presented its citizens with benefits and challenges.

In a multi-paragraph essay, support your choice of Athens or Sparta as the city-state that provided the best life for its citizens. Include details on education, daily life, and government in your argument.

Do Aliens Exist?

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Read, view, and discuss different theories about the existence of aliens. Do you think that there is life on another planet? What evidence do you think proves that aliens may or may not exist?

In a multi-paragraph argumentative essay, argue for or against the existence of aliens. Remember to include and cite key details and facts from your sources that clearly elaborate on your argument and counterarguments.

Do Pro Athletes Deserve High Salaries?

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Many professional athletes and entertainers earn large sums of money. Do you agree or disagree with these individuals making high salaries? Use specific details and examples to convince others to support your position.

Do You Want Fame?

Prompt Source(s): 0 **Source Lexile Range:** N/A

Some people spend their entire lives seeking the rewards of fame and fortune. Others shy away from the spotlight due to the downsides of celebrity. If you had the opportunity, would you want to be famous? Why or why not?

Write a multi-paragraph essay taking a stand on whether or not fame is really advantageous.

Dr. John Snow and the Cholera Epidemic

Prompt Source(s): 0 **Source Lexile Range:** N/A

Imagine you are Dr. John Snow, a medical doctor living in London in the mid 1800s. Your research on the cholera epidemic gripping London indicates that it is being caused by human waste in the water supply.

Write a letter to the Department of Health suggesting a plan of action for the elimination of cholera. Include facts and details to support your plan.

Ethics and Archaeology

Prompt Source(s): 3 **Source Lexile Range:** 890L-1170L

Source One: “Frozen in Time” By Vantage Learning
Source Lexile Level: 890L

Source Two: **Excerpt from “Ethics and Archaeology: Can You Dig It?”** By *The Economist* staff, featured in the 28 March 2002 online edition of *The Economist*, provided courtesy of *The Economist Newspaper*
Source Lexile Level: 1170L

Source Three: **“Bones of Contention: Native American Archaeology”** Film written and produced by Danielle Peck and Alex Seaborne of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) for BBC Horizon, featured in *Films for the Humanities and Sciences*, online video provided courtesy of Films Media Group and Hofstra University’s *Infobase: Films on Demand Database*
Source Lexile Level: N/A

[Click here to view the source\(s\) for this prompt.](#)

Should scientists be allowed to excavate ancient graves to gain knowledge about life in the past? Read the passage “Frozen in Time” and the article from the March 28, 2002

edition of The Economist entitled “Ethics and Archaeology: Can You Dig It?” View the Source Three video about archaeology entitled “Bones of Contention: Native American Archaeology.” Based on your readings and viewing, establish a claim on whether scientists should be allowed to excavate ancient graves to further our knowledge of the past.

In a well-developed essay, analyze the video and texts referred to above and develop a claim as to whether scientists should excavate ancient graves. To support your claim, consider all of the information in the passages and video. Be sure to include specific details from the resources to support your argument.

Extend the School Day?

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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The school board plans to add one and a half hours to school each day. Do you agree or disagree with extending the school day? Use specific details and examples to convince the school board to accept your position.

Extracurricular Activities: Beneficial or Not?

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Your school district has recently decided to eliminate your favorite sport, club, or performing art (soccer, chess, band, drama, etc.). These activities are fun for those who participate, but do they provide other benefits? Research whether extracurricular activities benefit students, and then adopt a position on this issue.

In a multi-paragraph essay, use your research to argue for or against eliminating extracurricular activities. Include facts and details from your research to support your argument.

Finding an Envelope Full of Money

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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You and a friend are shopping in the mall when your friend finds an unmarked envelope filled with several hundred dollars. There is no identification showing the owner of the money or the envelope. You must persuade your friend to either keep it or turn it in to security.

Write a multi-paragraph essay presenting your opinion as to whether your friend should keep or turn in the envelope containing several hundred dollars. Include facts and details to support your opinion.

Funding for the Arts

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Imagine the School Board is deciding whether or not to provide funding for arts education in your school district. Funding for arts education allows schools to offer elective courses such as dance, music, drama, and art. What experiences have you had with arts education? Why might some vote against funding arts education?

Write a letter to the School Board persuading them to vote either for or against funding for arts education. Include facts and examples to support your position.

Greatest American Figure

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Think about the greatest American figures of past and present day. Who do you feel is the greatest American? What special qualities does this person possess that makes him or her commendable? What were his or her achievements?

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you describe who you feel is the greatest American and persuade others to agree with your position. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

Healthier Food Options at School

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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For many years, there have been snack machines in your school cafeteria, which sell things like candy bars, cupcakes, and sugary sodas. During the school year, many parents have asked the principal to have healthier food options introduced at your school. However, before making any changes to the menus in the cafeteria and the snacks in the machine, the principal must get permission from the school board.

Before asking the school board to consider these changes, your principal would like to hear students' opinions on whether or not healthier food options for lunch would be a welcome change. Do you want to see healthier foods in your cafeteria, or are you happy with your options as they are now?

Write a letter to your school principal explaining your position on healthier food options at school. Use examples, facts, and other evidence to support your point of view.

Helicopter Parents

Prompt Source(s): 3 **Source Lexile Range:** 1100L-1400L

Source One: Excerpt from “Putting Parents in Their Place: Outside Class” featured in the 21 March 2006 edition of *The Washington Post* By *Washington Post* Staff Writer Valerie Strauss, provided courtesy of *The Washington Post* and the WP Company

Source Lexile Level: 1300L-1400L

Source Two: Excerpt from “The Myth of the Helicopter Parent” featured in the 23 Feb. 2013 edition of *Psychology Today* By Susan Krauss Whitbourne, Ph. D, of *Psychology Today*, provided courtesy of *Psychology Today* and Sussex Publishers

Source Lexile Level: 1100L-1200L

Source Three: “Avoid ‘Helicopter Parenting’ to Motivate Kids” By *The Today Show* staff, provided courtesy of *The Today Show* and the National Broadcasting Company (NBC)

Source Lexile Level: N/A

[Click here to view the source\(s\) for this prompt.](#)

Your school just created a new student organization called “Debate Club” which you have joined. The first topic up for debate is: Does too much parental involvement hinder a child’s independence? To prepare for the first meeting, you must determine your opinion about this topic based on all of the information you have read and analyzed, as well as your own experiences.

Determine your position on the topic: Does too much parental involvement hinder a child’s independence? Then write a well-developed essay in which you make a claim that clearly answers this question. Defend your claim with clear reasons and relevant evidence from the sources you have read, viewed, and analyzed, as well as from your own experience.

Homelessness in America

Prompt Source(s): 0 **Source Lexile Range:** N/A

Last year, there were 3 million homeless people in this country. Considering the severity of the homeless problem in the United States, we are in dire need of a solution. There

are many opinions regarding what is the best program or plan to help bring an end to homelessness in the United States.

What do you think can be done to help solve the problem of homelessness? In a well-organized essay, explain your solution to the homelessness problem.

Homework: Beneficial or Not?

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Some students believe homework is beneficial for their educational goals, while other students believe it is not. Research the benefits of homework, and then adopt a position on this issue.

In a multi-paragraph essay, use your research to argue whether homework is beneficial to students' educational goals. Include facts and details from your research to support your argument.

How to Handle a Bully

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Imagine that one of your friends is being bullied in school and is unsure of what to do about the situation. He or she has asked for your help. Should your friend speak to an adult at school about this situation?

Write a letter to your friend in which you suggest ways that he or she could end the bullying. Be sure to support your opinion with examples and/or reasons from your personal experience or readings.

Ideal Winter Getaway

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Every year, many schools close for winter break. With the changing of the seasons comes the need for a change of pace. During this period of time, many families choose to get away for a little rest and relaxation before the onset of school-related activities.

Write a letter to your parents persuading them of the many ways a winter getaway would be beneficial to your family. Be sure to describe the ideal location for this getaway and what kinds of activities you could participate in during the break. Be sure to use specific details to support your ideas.

Illegal Immigration

Prompt Source(s): 2 **Source Lexile Range:** 1000L-1100L

Source One: “Achieving the American Dream” By Mario Matthew Cuomo
Source Lexile Level: 1000L-1100L

Source Two: “The New Colossus” By Emma Lazarus
Source Lexile Level: NP

[Click here to view the source\(s\) for this prompt.](#)

There is much talk recently about illegal immigration from various countries. United States citizens and leaders appear to be largely divided on this issue. What is your position on illegal immigration? Should the government keep the U.S. borders open or closed?

After carefully reading Mario Cuomo’s “Achieving the American Dream” and Emma Lazarus’s “The New Colossus,” write a letter to the editor of your local paper persuading the readers to agree with your position on this issue. Provide convincing arguments and specific details to support your claim. Be sure to address counterarguments and counterclaims. You may wish to conduct additional research on the topic to gather facts and statistics to further support your argument.

iPods and MP3 Players at School

Prompt Source(s): 0 **Source Lexile Range:** N/A

People everywhere use iPods and MP3 players to listen to their favorite music while jogging, studying, driving, and working. However, the use of iPods and MP3 players while in school is frequently banned. Many students feel that they should be able to listen to music at school while studying and learning, while many adults feel that listening to music during school hours distracts students and impairs their ability to learn.

Write a multi-paragraph editorial recommending a school policy for the use of iPods and MP3 players in school. Include facts and details to support your recommendation.

Is Honesty the Best Policy?

Prompt Source(s): 1 quot. **Source Lexile Range:** N/A

An old proverb says honesty is the best policy. Sometimes, however, honesty might hurt a person’s feelings. Explain why you either agree or disagree with being honest at all times.

After reading the provided articles, establish a position on whether napping is beneficial for people. Write a multi-paragraph essay using facts and details from your sources to support your position and to address the opposing point of view.

Listening to Music in Study Hall

Prompt Source(s): 2 **Source Lexile Range:** 1000L-1100L

Source One: Excerpted letter addressed to the editor of the *Daleworth Daily Journal* entitled “First Letter” By Vantage Learning

Source Lexile Level: 1000L-1100L

Source Two: Excerpted letter addressed to the editor of the *Daleworth Daily Journal* entitled “Second Letter” By Vantage Learning

Source Lexile Level: 1000L-1100L

[Click here to view the source\(s\) for this prompt.](#)

School rules are not always popular with students. One controversial school rule in particular has recently become the subject of two letters to the editor of the *Daleworth Daily Journal*. The rule forbids students to listen to music as they study, even if they use headphones and do not disturb others.

After reading the letters to the editor, decide how you feel about listening to music in study hall. In a detailed essay, argue your position on this school rule. Use details from the text to support your argument.

Locker Policies

Prompt Source(s): 0 **Source Lexile Range:** N/A

Most schools allow students to use their lockers only at specific times. This policy is being reviewed by the school committee. Write an article for your school newspaper defending your opinion.

Love or Money

Prompt Source(s): 0 **Source Lexile Range:** N/A

What would you rather have, love or money? Why?

Write an essay describing which you would rather have. Be sure to support your decision with specific details and examples from your own experiences or readings.

Making Science Fiction Real

Prompt Source(s): 0 Source Lexile Range: N/A

In science-fiction movies and television shows, we often see futuristic inventions or ideas that we hope to experience one day. Did you know that cell phones, submarines, and helicopters appeared in science fiction well before their actual creation?

Research the invention of cell phones, submarines, and helicopters. Then, in a detailed essay, argue that submarines or helicopters have had a greater impact on mankind than cell phones. Be sure to include and cite evidence from your research.

Military Draft: Pro or Con?

Prompt Source(s): 2 Source Lexile Range: 1150L-1350L

Source One: Excerpt from the February 2013 issue of *The Saturday Evening Post* entitled “The Argument: Should America Reinstate the Draft? (Yes)”
By Congressman Charles Rangel, part of a joint article by Charles Rangel and James Lacey for *The Saturday Evening Post*, provided courtesy of The Saturday Evening Post Society

Source Lexile Level: 1150L-1250L

Source Two: Excerpt from the February 2013 issue of *The Saturday Evening Post* entitled “The Argument: Should America Reinstate the Draft? (No)”
By Defense Expert James Lacey, part of a joint article by Charles Rangel and James Lacey for *The Saturday Evening Post*, provided courtesy of The Saturday Evening Post Society

Source Lexile Level: 1250L-1350L

[Click here to view the source\(s\) for this prompt.](#)

After reading articles discussing the pros and cons of a military draft in the United States, decide which side of the issue you support.

In a multi-paragraph essay, argue whether or not you support a military draft in the United States. Use facts and details from the articles to support your position.

Nonviolence during the Civil Rights Movement of 1960

Prompt Source(s): 0 Source Lexile Range: N/A

Imagine you are part of a group of African American college students in Alabama in the 1960s. In support of the civil rights movement, your group has decided to practice nonviolent protests. You have been harassed at lunch counters, physically kept from attending classes, sprayed with fire hoses, and attacked by police dogs. Some

members of your group do not feel that nonviolence is working and are ready to defend themselves the next time they are physically attacked. Others, however, believe that the principles of nonviolence must be followed or the movement will fail.

You are given the deciding vote on whether or not to continue using nonviolence. In a multi-paragraph letter to the editor of the college newspaper, explain your vote, showing that you understand the opposing argument.

Persuasive Letter about Jackie Robinson

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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As the first African American major league baseball player, Jackie Robinson played a significant role in the history of baseball. Imagine that you work for the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum and that, this month, there will be a special exhibition featuring several famous players.

In a detailed letter, persuade the president of the organization to include Jackie Robinson in this exhibition. Facts and examples regarding the role he played in the sport, as well as some of the many contributions he made to baseball during his time should be provided.

Petitioning Your Parents for a Privilege

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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What child has not asked his or her parents for a special privilege at one time or another? Think about a privilege you want that your parents are able to grant you. It may be their permission for you to stay up later, get a cell phone, or go to a special event.

Now, write a multi-paragraph essay in which you request this special privilege from your parents. Be sure to use reasons and arguments to convince your parents to grant your request.

Recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance

Prompt Source(s):	1 quot.	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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The Pledge of Allegiance is an oath of loyalty to the United States and to its national flag. It is regularly recited in unison at public events, and especially in public schools, where the Pledge is often part of a daily routine in the morning. The Pledge is spoken as follows:

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"I pledge allegiance to the Flag, of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

The Pledge was written by Baptist minister Francis Bellamy on September 7, 1892, for a well-known children's magazine, Youth's Companion. The owners of Youth's Companion were selling flags to schools and approached Bellamy to write the Pledge for their advertising campaign. It was promoted as a way to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus coming to America.

In 1892, President Benjamin Harrison declared that the Pledge was to be recited during Columbus Day observances in public schools. It eventually became a daily ritual in schools, with recent debate over whether this ritual should be continued.

Keeping in mind that it originated as a marketing campaign, write a persuasive essay to your principal arguing your position on students in your school reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Recommend Food to the Cafeteria

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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The cafeteria serves some foods people like and some they don't like. Think about three different foods that you would like the cafeteria manager to serve that you can't get now in the cafeteria. Write a letter to the cafeteria manager convincing her to serve each of the three new foods that you are suggesting.

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Recommending Good Entertainment

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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On the recommendations of friends, people often see certain movies, read certain books, or listen to certain music. What movie have you seen, or what book have you read, or what music have you listened to on the advice of a friend that you really enjoyed, and why did you think it was enjoyable?

Write an essay to persuade your classmates to see the movie, read the book, or listen to the music that you enjoyed.

Recycling

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Americans generate 4.5 pounds of waste per person every day. Certain plastics, paper products, glass, and aluminum can be recycled instead of being dumped in a landfill.

Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper persuading readers to participate in their community's recycling program. Include facts to support your position on recycling.

Rewrite the “Yes, Virginia, ... Santa Claus” Letter

Prompt Source(s): 1 **Source Lexile Range:** 900L-1000L

Source One: Editorial excerpt from the 21 Sept. 1897 edition of *The New York Sun* “Yes, Virginia, There Is a Santa Claus” Letter to the editor written by Virginia O’Hanlon, editorial response written by *The New York Sun* editor Francis Pharcellus Church, provided courtesy of *The New York Sun* and *Newseum*

Source Lexile Level: 900L-1000L

[Click here to view the source\(s\) for this prompt.](#)

In 1897, an 8-year-old girl wrote a letter to *The New York Sun* newspaper asking if there is a Santa Claus. The editor’s reply has become famous as the “Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus” letter. If you were currently the editor of *The New York Sun*, how would you answer that letter? How would an answer in the twenty-first century differ from an answer in the nineteenth century?

In a letter written as the editor of *The New York Sun*, answer the question, “Is there a Santa Claus?” Include reasons to support and convince readers of your position.

Rising to the Challenge of Cyberbullying

Prompt Source(s): 0 **Source Lexile Range:** N/A

Although cyberbullying does not always take place at school or during school hours, there is often a school-related link between the parties involved. Perhaps the bully and the victim are classmates, or perhaps they met through a classmate. How can a school respond to and protect students from cyberbullying, especially when the bullying occurs off campus? What are the school’s limits of responsibility?

After reading the teacher assigned articles on school accountability, write a detailed essay arguing your position on the responsibility of a school to protect students from cyberbullying. Be sure to acknowledge competing views and cite evidence from the texts to support your position.

In a multi-paragraph essay, present your position on the colonies remaining under British rule. Be sure to use facts and details to support your position.

Space Shuttle Mission

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Your principal has been asked to select one student from your school to go on the next space shuttle flight. The selected student will join the astronauts on their next mission to space. Why should you be selected to join this mission?

Write an essay persuading your principal to choose you to participate in the next space shuttle mission.

Spending Money

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Some parents believe that children should earn their own spending money by helping out around the home. Others believe that children should receive an allowance and should not be required to earn their spending money. Should children be required to earn their spending money or should they receive an allowance to obtain their spending money?

Write an essay persuading parents to accept your opinion on whether or not children should have to earn their own spending money.

State Tests and Retention Policy

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Statewide tests are administered towards the end of the school year in order to evaluate whether the students in the state have learned all that was expected in multiple core subjects during that school year. In some states, students are held back another year based on whether or not the students performed up to a certain level.

Imagine that **your** State Department of Education has decided that students who score less than 50 percent correct on the state test will be retained (held back) next year. What is your opinion on this policy? Write a persuasive essay to your state representative persuading him or her that students should or should not be retained based on performance on the state test.

Surveillance Cameras in Public Places

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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There is an ongoing debate over the use of surveillance cameras in public places. Some people feel that these cameras prevent crime, protect property, and ensure public safety. Others feel that the cameras violate an individual's right to privacy.

Write a multi-paragraph essay stating whether you agree or disagree with the use of surveillance cameras in public places. Be sure to use specific reasons and examples to support your position.

Tattoos and Body Art

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Tattoos and other forms of body piercing have become increasingly popular with young people today. In many states, laws stipulate that one must be at least 18 years old in order to pierce a body part or to get a tattoo. Do you agree that such age restrictions are fair?

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you defend your position on this issue. Be sure to support your argument with specific reasons.

Teen Curfew Laws

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Are curfew laws that target teens unfair? After reading the sources provided by your teacher, write an essay that argues your position on whether curfew laws that target teens are unfair. Support your opinion with evidence from the texts. Be sure to discuss competing views.

Teenage Responsibility

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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When a child becomes a teenager, some adults believe that he or she should be held responsible for his or her actions. However, other adults believe that teenagers still lack the ability and wisdom to be responsible for their actions. What do you think? At what age should teenagers be held responsible for their actions?

Write a persuasive essay in which you defend your position on this issue. Be sure to support your position with reasons or arguments from your personal experience.

The Clean Machine

Prompt Source(s): 1 **Source Lexile Range:** 900L-1000L

Source One: "Clean Driving: The Green Machine and the Power of Electricity" By Vantage Learning
Source Lexile Level: 910L

[Click here to view the source\(s\) for this prompt.](#)

Read the article "Clean Driving: The Green Machine and the Power of Electricity."

You are Henri Laurent. Write a speech to deliver at the International Auto Show to convince those visitors to buy your Green Machine. Use details from the source to support your speech.

The Effects of Television

Prompt Source(s): 2 **Source Lexile Range:** 800L-1100L

Source One: Excerpt from "The Great TV Debate: Is TV Good or Bad for Kids Today?" By Kate Kelly of *Parents.com*, provided courtesy of *Parents.com*

Source Lexile Level: 1000L-1100L

Source Two: Excerpt from "Kids' Watch Television—Pros and Cons" By the *KidsWorldFun.com* Staff, provided courtesy of *KidsWorldFun: A Portal for Kids, Parents and Teachers* and LM Digital Media

Source Lexile Level: 800L-900L

[Click here to view the source\(s\) for this prompt.](#)

Is watching television harmful or helpful? After reading the provided texts, write an essay that argues your position on whether television viewing is harmful or helpful. Support your position with evidence from the texts. Be sure to discuss competing views.

The First Amendment

Prompt Source(s): 1 **Source Lexile Range:** 1000L-1100L

Source One: "Amendment I" of the ratified Articles (Articles 3-12) of the U.S. Constitution excerpted from the U.S. Bill of Rights Written by the

First Congress of the United States of America, provided courtesy of the National Archives and the U.S. Government

Source Lexile Level: 1000L-1100L

[Click here to view the source\(s\) for this prompt.](#)

There have been many important amendments to the United States Constitution. Some people argue that the First Amendment is the most important of all because it protects some of our most fundamental freedoms.

Do you believe the First Amendment is the most important amendment to the United States Constitution? Why or why not? Write a well-developed essay in which you convince the reader to accept your position.

The Internet as a Tool

Prompt Source(s): 0

Source Lexile Range: N/A

The internet can be seen as a tool with many uses. Many people use the internet to conduct research and to keep in touch with friends and family. Although there is plenty of useful information found on the internet, you have to be aware that not everything you read is trustworthy. How do you feel about communicating and conducting research on the internet? Do you think the internet is a useful tool that helps or harms learning and communication? Why do you think the way you do?

Write a multi-paragraph essay explaining whether you think the internet helps or harms learning and communication. Use details, reasons, examples, logical arguments, and/or personal experiences to support your position.

“The Monkey’s Paw”

Prompt Source(s): 1

Source Lexile Range: 800L-900L

Source One: Short story “The Monkey’s Paw” featured in *The Lady of the Barge* By W. W. Jacobs, edited and published as an e-book by David Widger of *Project Gutenberg*, provided courtesy of *Project Gutenberg*

Source Lexile Level: 880L

[Click here to view the source\(s\) for this prompt.](#)

Read “The Monkey’s Paw.” Movie producers are considering creating a film version of “The Monkey’s Paw.” What is the story about? What are the advantages of this story that make it suitable to be a film? Why should the producers make a film version of this story?

In a multi-paragraph editorial, defend your position on the use of video games as part of middle-school physical education programs. Include facts and details to support your position.

Violence on Television

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Some people believe that seeing violence on television can cause someone to commit a violent act. Do you feel that violent television programming contributes to violence in society?

Write an essay persuading these people to accept your opinion on whether or not violence on television leads to violence in our society.

Vote for Me!

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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People run for elected offices, from the President of the United States to class officers in a school. You are running for class president for your grade level. Write an essay convincing your classmates that you are the best choice for class president.

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Weather-Related Makeup Days

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Sometimes a snow or hurricane day can be seen as a great gift, until you realize that you have to make up any days missed at the end of the year. The state requires all schools to make up any school days missed due to severe weather events. Think about how you feel about having to make up those days.

In a well-developed essay, persuade your principal to either support or not support making up any school days missed at the end of the year due to severe weather events. Include facts and details to support your position.

who violate the rules. Critics contend that such policies severely punish students for relatively minor violations and fail to consider individual circumstances. Do you think your school should have a zero tolerance policy toward students found to be carrying dangerous items? Should there be exceptions to the policies?

Write a persuasive essay to be read by your principal in which you support your position on this issue. Be sure to support your stance with well-reasoned arguments and appropriate reasons.

Ancient Traditions Influence Modern Society

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Ancient traditions often influence and are still present in modern society. In the United States, for example, our current democracy is based on ancient Greek traditions.

Analyze information gained from classroom research and personal experience to write a multi-paragraph essay in which you present your position on the extent to which ancient traditions continue to be dynamic influences on modern society. Be sure to include facts, details, and examples for support.

Banning *A Wrinkle in Time*

Prompt Source(s):	1	Source Lexile Range:	700L-800L
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Source One: *A Wrinkle in Time* By Madeleine L'Engle
Source Lexile Level: 740L

Source(s) are not provided in the prompt task for this prompt due to copyright law regulations and/or length of source(s). Teachers should provide access to the specified source(s).

Despite earning the Newbery Medal, Madeleine L'Engle's novel *A Wrinkle in Time* has been placed on many "banned books" lists. While many people enjoy L'Engle's imaginative story through space, others do not agree it is suitable for children due to its complexity and religious content.

After reading the novel, decide whether *A Wrinkle in Time* is appropriate for middle school students. Why or why not? Write a multi-paragraph essay that states your position on whether or not this novel should be banned from the classroom. Use details from the story to support your claim.

Best Defender of the Amazon Rainforest

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Many groups lay claim to the rainforest including native Amazonians, rubber tappers, loggers, settlers, cattle ranchers, environmental groups and those interested in

Source Four: Image Plate I “The Bostonian’s Paying the Excise-man, or Tarring & Feathering” By Philip Dawe
Source Lexile Level: N/A

[Click here to view the source\(s\) for this prompt.](#)

Do you believe that the colonists were justified in fighting the British during the American Revolution? Were the colonists’ reactions to the events leading to the Revolutionary War appropriate or misguided?

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you analyze the colonists’ complaints against the British and defend the colonists’ reasons for rebelling. Be sure to cite reliable sources to support your argument.

Direct vs. Indirect Democracy

Prompt Source(s): 0 **Source Lexile Range:** N/A

Imagine you are part of the Greek Assembly. A citizen has argued that the country move from direct to indirect democracy. Do you support him/her?

In a multi-paragraph essay, present your position as a member of the Greek Assembly on the issue of moving from direct to indirect democracy. Be sure to support your position with facts and details.

Discontinue Production of the Penny?

Prompt Source(s): 0 **Source Lexile Range:** N/A

There is an ongoing debate as to whether the United States should continue to produce the penny. At the root of the issue are the cost of penny production, the effects on consumers of rounding prices up or down if the penny is eliminated, and the time wasted by consumers when counting out pennies at the cash register. It has also been suggested that there is great sentimental value for the penny, and it has value for fundraisers and savings.

Research the effects of eliminating the penny to decide your position on this issue. Write an essay in which you support your position and address the counter-arguments to your position. Use information from your sources to support your arguments.

Donner Party Decisions' Impact on the Journey to California

Prompt Source(s): 0

Source Lexile Range: N/A

The Donner Party is a group of emigrants infamous for taking desperate measures to survive the winter of 1846–1847 after becoming stranded in the Sierra Nevada mountains. But how did the group become stranded in the first place? Research the Donner Party's journey and the decisions made by the group as they attempted to reach California from Illinois.

After researching the Donner Party's journey, write a detailed, persuasive essay arguing for the decision that you think had the most negative impact on their journey to California. Include facts and details from your research to support your argument and convince your reader.

Driverless Cars for Everyday Use?

Prompt Source(s): 0

Source Lexile Range: N/A

Can you imagine a highway full of cars and no human drivers in sight? Certainly, there are advantages and disadvantages to the driverless car concept. The military currently uses driverless vehicles and finds that the benefits outweigh the disadvantages, but in our everyday lives, what are the advantages and disadvantages of using driverless cars? After researching the issue, write a multi-paragraph essay presenting your position on whether driverless cars will make everyday life better in the future or cause new problems.

E-Books or Paper Books for School Libraries?

Prompt Source(s): 6

Source Lexile Range: 980L-1060L

Source One: "E-Reading" By Vantage Learning

Source Lexile Level: 1060L

Source Two: "Ink and Paper" By Vantage Learning

Source Lexile Level: 980L

Source Three: "Electronic or Paper Books in Schools" By Vantage Learning

Source Lexile Level: 1000L

Source Four: Bar Graph "Energy Usage Comparison" featured in the E-Book *Design for the Environment/Alternatives to Traditional Book Publishing* By the Design for the Environment (DFE) Group A15, provided courtesy of *WikiMedia Commons* and *Wikiversity.org*

Source Lexile Level: N/A

Source Five: **Pie Chart “Figure 14” featured in the E-Book *Design for the Environment/Alternatives to Traditional Book Publishing*** By the Design for the Environment (DFE) Group A15, provided courtesy of *WikiMedia Commons* and *Wikiversity.org*, chart created by *WikiMedia Commons* user Pradyumna Challa, excerpted from a 2008 publication of the *National Association of College Stores*

Source Lexile Level: N/A

Source Six: **Pie Chart “Figure 15” featured in the E-Book *Design for the Environment/Alternatives to Traditional Book Publishing*** By the Design for the Environment (DFE) Group A15, provided courtesy of *WikiMedia Commons* and *Wikiversity.org*, chart created by *WikiMedia Commons* user Pradyumna Challa, excerpted from a 2008 publication of the *National Association of College Stores*

Source Lexile Level: N/A

[Click here to view the source\(s\) for this prompt.](#)

The Internet has given us unprecedented access to all sorts of reading materials. With electronic tablet devices or e-readers, people can download as many books as they want and carry them wherever they travel. However, the physical feeling of holding a book and turning its pages cannot be replaced for many readers. Your principal is thinking about expanding your school library’s inventory. He or she is deciding whether to purchase more electronic tablet devices (or e-readers) for e-books or more paper books.

After reading the resources, write a letter to your principal arguing your position on the issue of purchasing more electronic tablet devices (or e-readers) for e-books or more paper books for your school library. Be sure to cite the text to strengthen your argument and address opposing sides.

Establish Homework Clubs?

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Studies have shown that one way to improve student achievement is to start an afterschool homework club. Teachers and students volunteer to meet with those who either have difficulty in certain subjects or who want to finish their homework early. Use specific details and examples to argue for or against the idea of establishing homework clubs in your school.

Foster Care for Pony Boy?

Prompt Source(s):	1	Source Lexile Range:	700L-800L
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Source One: *The Outsiders* By S.E. Hinton
Source Lexile Level: 750L

Source(s) are not provided in the prompt task for this prompt due to copyright law regulations and/or length of source(s). Teachers should provide access to the specified source(s).

Imagine you are the judge in *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton who must determine whether Pony Boy should be allowed to remain in the care of his older brothers, Darry and Soda Pop, or whether he should be sent to foster care. Would Darry and Soda Pop provide a suitable environment for raising Pony Boy?

In a multi-paragraph essay, present your position on whether Pony Boy should remain in the care of his brothers or be placed in foster care. Include references to the novel to support your position, and address counterarguments or opposing points of view.

Getting Americans to Vote

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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In the United States, around 60% of U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote actually did vote in the 2004 Presidential Election. The candidates try to attract and excite voters by making promises, highlighting their own accomplishments, and attacking their opponent. But how can we actually make sure that all of the people who are eligible to vote actually do VOTE? Who should lead this effort and how will it be accomplished? In a persuasive essay, discuss the best methods that will encourage all Americans to vote if they have the right to.

Handicapped Students and Intramural Sports

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Imagine that a handicapped student has entered your class and would like to play an intramural sport. Some of your friends are in favor of the student's participation, but others are not. Which intramural sports might a handicapped student be able to play? How might the handicap affect the student's participation?

In a detailed essay, persuade classmates of your position on a handicapped student participating in an intramural sport. Support your argument with details on the student's handicap and its possible effect on the student's participation.

Helping the Victims of Hurricane Katrina

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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In August of 2005, Hurricane Katrina became one of the deadliest and most destructive natural disasters in America's history. Originally, Katrina formed over the Bahamas and passed through the southern region of Florida as a Category 1 hurricane. Katrina gained strength while going through the Gulf of Mexico and quickly became one of the strongest hurricanes recorded. By the time the storm reached the Louisiana area it was listed as Category 3 and consequently devastated everything in its path. Much of the Gulf Region was destroyed due to flooding, massive winds, and severe and heavy rainfall. The severity of Katrina caused 53 levee breaks or overflows in the New Orleans area, which led to eighty percent of the city being underwater. This storm also severely damaged the coasts of Mississippi and Alabama, making Katrina the most destructive and costliest natural disaster in the history of the United States. The total damage from Katrina is estimated at \$81.2 billion, with a confirmed death toll of 1,836, and 705 people yet to be found. The damage of this storm went beyond property, taking many lives, separating families, and displacing many residents of the Louisiana and Mississippi area permanently. To this day, the Gulf Coast Region continues to rebuild itself and many disenfranchised people are without homes, jobs, or their family members.

Imagine that you have been asked to write a persuasive letter to the people of America asking them to donate one dollar to a relief fund established for the hurricane survivors. What are some of the ways in which money donated can be used to best help those in need?

Write a persuasive letter to the people of America asking them to donate one dollar to a hurricane survivors' relief fund. Include facts and details to support your request and the manner in which the funds will be used.

Highway or No Highway?

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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The Department of Transportation wants to build a highway that passes through your town within eyesight of your school. The new highway will improve the local economy by creating jobs in your town and will help people get around more easily. School teachers say it will be too noisy and may cause distractions. Planners have promised they will build a wall to block the sound, but teachers say this will be ugly and ineffective.

Take a position on this issue. Write a well-developed persuasive essay to representatives of the local government to convince them to agree with your position.

In recent years, concerns about climate change, carbon footprints, and energy independence have received increased media attention. To address these issues, scientists have been seeking alternatives to fossil fuels. Hydrogen offers pollution-free energy, and many believe it will be a practical contender in the alternative energy field.

Read the excerpt from the article “Rocks in Your Gas Tank?” by Dr. Tony Phillips and Steve Price of the National Aeronautic and Space Administration (NASA). Then, write an essay that argues the practicality of using hydrogen gas as a fuel source and evaluates the claim that zeolite rocks can provide efficient storage. Be sure to support your position with evidence from the article.

Important to Own a Pet?

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Some people believe owning a pet is important, while others do not. Using specific details and examples to support your position, argue for or against owning a pet.

Individuals Affecting Government Actions

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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People often feel powerless when it comes to having an effect on government decisions. However, history contains many examples of individuals or community groups that have affected changes in government policies and laws.

In a well-developed essay, persuade your classmates that they can influence government decisions and actions. Include facts and details to support your argument.

Is Imagination More Important than Knowledge?

Prompt Source(s):	1 quot.	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Source One:	Quotation By Albert Einstein
Source Lexile Level:	N/A

Prompt includes quotation-based source(s).

Scientist Albert Einstein said,

“Imagination is more important than knowledge.”

Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Include specific details and examples to convince others to support your position.

Is Milk Good for Your Health?

Prompt Source(s): 4 **Source Lexile Range:** 1080L-1170L

Source One: “You Should Pass on the Milk” By Vantage Learning
Source Lexile Level: 1080L

Source Two: “Can You Pass the Milk?” By Vantage Learning
Source Lexile Level: 1170L

Source Three: “Consumption of Milk Declining in High-Income Countries, Growing in Developing Countries” By the *United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)* staff, provided courtesy of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
Source Lexile Level: N/A

Source Four: “Worldwide Prevalence of Lactose Intolerance in Recent Populations” By the *United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)* staff, provided courtesy of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
Source Lexile Level: N/A

[Click here to view the source\(s\) for this prompt.](#)

It is common knowledge that milk is a great source of calcium, which can promote bone health. Many people add milk to their diets to remain healthy. Yet, is drinking milk really necessary? Could the health risks outweigh the benefits?

Read the sources about the benefits and risks of drinking milk, and then write a multi-paragraph essay in which you discuss whether milk is helpful or harmful to your health. Use specific evidence from the sources to support your argument.

Jefferson vs. Hamilton on Economics or Federalism

Prompt Source(s): 0 **Source Lexile Range:** N/A

Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton, rival founding fathers of the U.S. Constitution, disagreed on a number of issues, including the formation of the National Bank, the national economic vision, and federalism. The core of their disagreement centered on the extent of power that the federal government would wield. How would these men feel about current topics such as trade, education, the nation’s infrastructure, and government subsidies? How are their beliefs relevant today?

Research an issue related to the beliefs of either Jefferson or Hamilton on economics or federalism. Decide which side you support. Then, in a multi-paragraph essay, present your argument supporting Jefferson's or Hamilton's beliefs on the issue. Use evidence from your research to support your position.

Keep the Movie Theater Open

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Going to movies is a major source of entertainment for many students. Imagine that the only discount movie theater in your area is closing. Write a persuasive essay in support of keeping the discount movie theater open.

This is a representative sample of an AIMS test question. This is not an operational test form. Copyright 2005 by the Arizona Department of Education.

Learning Language Arts Using Videos

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Suppose that instead of using textbooks, language arts teachers were being encouraged to use videos to teach such topics as fiction, nonfiction, listening and speaking, parts of speech, and research. After viewing one or more videos from a series like Discovering Language Arts, think about learning from a video instead of a textbook. Which language arts topic was easier to learn from the video? Why was it easier to learn this way?

In a well-developed essay, discuss the language arts topic(s) that would be easier to learn through videos than from a textbook. Include information from the video(s) to support your discussion.

Mandatory Participation in an Extracurricular Activity?

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Your principal has decided that all students must participate in at least one extracurricular activity. For example, students could participate in sports, work on the yearbook, or serve on the student council. Do you agree or disagree with this decision? Use specific details and examples to convince others to support your position.

Take a position on this issue. Write a well-developed persuasive essay to the school administrators to convince them to either cancel or continue the pep rallies.

Permission to Visit a Workplace

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Many schools have partnerships with local companies and organizations that allow students to explore certain professions. Write a letter to the manager of a local workplace that performs the type of work you would like to pursue. Convince the employer to allow you to visit. Include details about why you chose that workplace and the specific job.

Prayer in School

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Many public schools allow groups of students to hold prayer meetings on an informal basis, but they do not allow prayer to be included in school-sanctioned ceremonies or events. Write a letter to your local school board proposing a school district policy on prayer in school. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your position.

Preparing for Natural Disasters

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Think about a natural disaster that affected a specific country and the lives of its people. Imagine you live in this country. What can be done to better prepare for another disaster? Is there anything that the government and citizens can do to be ready?

Analyze a country's previous experiences in dealing with a natural disaster and possible future actions that could be taken to prepare for another. Then, in a multi-paragraph essay, persuade readers of the measures you think the government and the people of this country should take to prepare for another natural disaster. Be sure to include reasons, details, and examples to support your argument.

Providing the Basic Needs

Prompt Source(s): 0

Source Lexile Range: N/A

We live in a world where the basic necessities of life now come at a cost that many cannot afford. Whether it is food, shelter, or medicine, millions of people struggle to have basic needs met for themselves or their loved ones. Do you believe that all people have the right to have certain needs met whether they can afford them or not?

Decide whether or not you think basic needs should be met for all people, regardless of their financial situation. In a persuasive essay, write an editorial to your local paper arguing either for or against the requirement of this basic need for all people.

Public vs. Private Schools

Prompt Source(s): 0

Source Lexile Range: N/A

Although most students in the United States attend public schools, there are a number of students who attend private schools for smaller classes and an enriched educational experience. Which type of school are you in favor of? Which do you think provides a better experience for students and why?

In a detailed essay, persuade the reader that either public or private schools provide a better educational experience for students. Give examples to support your response.

Resources of China, Japan, and World Economies

Prompt Source(s): 0

Source Lexile Range: N/A

China and Japan have a profound effect on world economies. Having two of the most powerful economies in the world, they set the standard for success and impact every country.

Analyze the resources of Japan and China and their impact on world economies. Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you support your position on the resources that you believe have the greatest influence on world economies. Be sure to include facts, details, and examples to support your choice of resources.

Ride the Magic School Bus

Prompt Source(s): 1 Source Lexile Range: N/A

Source One: *The Magic School Bus Video Series* By Alison Blank, Kristin Laskas Martin and Jane Startz

Source Lexile Level: N/A

Source(s) are not provided in the prompt task for this prompt due to copyright law regulations and/or length of source(s). Teachers should provide access to the specified source(s).

After viewing a *Magic School Bus* video, write a letter to your classmates convincing them to take a ride with Ms. Frizzle and her class to discover the exciting scientific concepts that are presented in the video.

Be sure to address some of the many fun-filled facts they would learn if they were to take a trip on the Magic School Bus.

Rubber Tappers vs. Cattle Ranchers

Prompt Source(s): 0 Source Lexile Range: N/A

Imagine you are either a rubber tapper or a cattle rancher living in a Brazilian rainforest. A proposal has been made to develop a piece of the rainforest into a cattle ranch.

Choose a role (rubber tapper or cattle rancher) and write a multi-paragraph letter to the Brazilian government either for or against this proposal. Be sure to support your arguments with facts and details.

School Lunches: Healthy and Tasty?

Prompt Source(s): 0 Source Lexile Range: N/A

Over the years, adults have been concerned about the foods served to children as part of school lunches. While past school lunches followed legal guidelines for healthy meals, they often contained too much fat and salt and too many calories. Recent changes have been made to make all food available at school healthier.

There are some changes you may have noticed on your school campus:

- Elimination of soda, candy, and chips in vending machines
- Replacement of fried foods with baked versions (for example, French fries or chips)

- Prohibition of the sale of donuts, candy, cookies, or cupcakes for fundraisers

Other improvements have included adding salads or salad bars to some menus, or now you may be able to choose vegetables and dip, fresh fruit, or yogurt for snacks. Many school cafeterias are using more whole grains in things like hamburger buns, taco shells, and pasta noodles.

What should the guidelines be for your school cafeteria? Is it possible to serve healthy foods that taste good? Is there a place for choices, even if some choices aren't healthy? Who should decide: the schools, parents, or students?

In a multi-paragraph essay, craft an argument to support a School Lunch Program that you think is best for students. Be sure to state your opinion clearly, and use examples, facts, and other evidence to support your point of view.

Seat Belts on School Buses

Prompt Source(s): 4 **Source Lexile Range:** 800L-1000L

Source One: "No Need for Seat Belts" By Vantage Learning
Source Lexile Level: 800L-900L

Source Two: "Seat Belts Mean Safety" By Vantage Learning
Source Lexile Level: 900L-1000L

Source Three: "A Letter from a Concerned Parent" By Vantage Learning
Source Lexile Level: 800L-900L

Source Four: Info-graphics "My Choice...Their Ride" featured in the 2009 edition of *School Buses* By the *National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)* staff, provided courtesy of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the U.S. Department of Transportation
Source Lexile Level: N/A

[Click here to view the source\(s\) for this prompt.](#)

Cars have seat belts, but why not school buses? Buses are supposed to be safe without seat belts. Yet, many parents are still worried that students could be hurt in bus accidents.

What if your school wanted to buy seat belts for school buses? How would you react? Write a letter to your principal presenting your argument about seat belts on school buses. Be sure to include support from the sources below to strengthen your argument and address opposing sides.

Lakes or Everglades. It is your job to write a report to the governor outlining the condition of the ecosystem and the possibility that it is endangered.

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss the condition of a valuable ecosystem and your position on its status as endangered. Be sure to support your position with facts and details.

Substitute Nutritious Drinks

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Some people think that schools should offer only nutritious drinks such as white milk, water, and natural fruit juice. Do you agree or disagree with this policy? Use specific details and examples to convince your principal to accept your position.

Survival in *Snowbound*

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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The book *Snowbound* describes the journey of the Donner Party and the difficult moral decisions they were forced to make in order to survive. Do you believe their actions were justified under the circumstances?

In a well-developed essay, write to convince the reader of your position on this issue. Be sure to use details of the journey to support your argument.

Televisions in the Classroom

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Many schools provide televisions in classrooms because they believe teachers can supplement lessons with educational programming and films. Some schools, however, are opposed to this idea because they feel there is no need for television in a learning environment. What do you think?

Write a letter to your principal convincing him or her to agree with your position on this issue. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

The Lincoln Assassination: Guilt by Association?

Prompt Source(s): 4 Source Lexile Range: N/A

Source One: “Mary Surratt: A Just Verdict or a Wronged Victim?”
By Vantage Learning

Source Lexile Level: N/A

Source Two: “Argument In Defense of Mrs. Mary Surratt” *In Trial of the Assassins and Conspirators for the Murder of Abraham Lincoln 1865* By Fred A. Aiken

Source Lexile Level: 950L

Source Three: *In Trial of the Assassins and Conspirators for the Murder of Abraham Lincoln* By Barclay and Co.

Source Lexile Level: 950L

Source Four: “Mrs. Mary E. Surratt” *In Trial of the Assassins and Conspirators for the Murder of Abraham Lincoln* By Barclay and Co.

Source Lexile Level: 1010L

[Click here to view the source\(s\) for this prompt.](#)

History reveals that the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln was carried out by John Wilkes Booth. However, he did not act alone. There were many co-conspirators who were captured, found guilty, and sentenced to death. In particular, one of these co-conspirators was Mary Surratt, who was the first woman to be hanged by the United States government. She owned the boarding-house where Booth and his co-conspirators met. Questions linger, however, as to whether Mary Surratt was actually guilty of the crime or if she was simply guilty of associating with John Wilkes Booth.

After reading and analyzing the resources, write a multi-paragraph essay in which you argue whether Mary Surratt was rightfully executed or wrongfully convicted and sentenced to death due to her guilt by association. Be sure to include information from the resources to support your ideas, and address those who may disagree with your stance on the issue.

The Most Advanced Civilization

Prompt Source(s): 0 Source Lexile Range: N/A

Consider the ancient civilizations you have recently studied and select the one that you feel was the most highly developed.

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you persuade a historian that this civilization was the most advanced. Be sure to include specific examples and details to support your position.

“Thumbprint” by Eve Merriam

Prompt Source(s): 1 Source Lexile Range: NP

Source One: “Thumbprint” By Eve Merriam
Source Lexile Level: NP

Source(s) not provided due to copyright law regulations and/or length of source(s). Teachers should provide access to the specified source(s).

In Eve Merriam’s “Thumbprint,” the author emphasizes the importance of individuality and uniqueness. Merriam uses the image of a thumbprint to define her own uniqueness in the world.

Write a multi-paragraph letter to your parents convincing them to allow you to decorate a room in your home based on your own thumbprint, using Merriam’s ideas on individuality and uniqueness. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

Unsuitable Content in *The Outsiders*

Prompt Source(s): 1 Source Lexile Range: 700L-800L

Source One: *The Outsiders* By S.E. Hinton
Source Lexile Level: 750L

Source(s) not provided due to copyright law regulations and/or length of source(s). Teachers should provide access to the specified source(s).

Consider moral/ethical issues within the novel *The Outsiders*. For example, the young characters drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes, and engage in routine violence. Do these behaviors constitute unsuitable content for middle school students? Would you defend or oppose the removal of *The Outsiders* from the list of approved middle school novels?

Write a letter to your local Board of Education presenting your position on the suitability of *The Outsiders* for middle school students and whether it should remain on or be removed from the approved novel list. Include references to the novel to support your position, and address counterarguments or opposing points of view.

Was Andrew Jackson a President of the People?

Prompt Source(s): 0 Source Lexile Range: N/A

Some historians claim Andrew Jackson was a “President of the People.” Orphaned at just 13, Jackson was determined not to be like wealthy politicians who did not

understand the hardships of most Americans; he was a common man who worked his way up from poverty to become a military hero and President. Yet, some people strongly objected when he replaced government employees with his supporters or sided with white settlers during land disputes with Native Americans. These objections to Jackson's actions during his presidency bring into question the notion of whether Jackson really represented the American public. Do you think Andrew Jackson was a "President of the People?"

Write a multi-paragraph essay defending or refuting the notion that Andrew Jackson was a "President of the People." Support your position with specific examples and arguments from your readings and research.

Which Form of Art to Start?

Prompt Source(s):	1	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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Source One:	<i>The Art Start Video Series</i>
Source Lexile Level:	N/A

Source(s) not provided due to copyright law regulations and/or length of source(s). Teachers should provide access to the specified source(s).

The *Art Start* video series teaches the basics of various artistic media, including collage, drawing, fiber, painting, mood painting, pastels, sculpture, symbols, and sketching. After viewing one or more videos in the series, pretend you are speaking to a group of students who do not know much about art. Which medium would you select to persuade your audience to learn about and create?

In a persuasive essay, convince your audience to take up a specific artistic medium. Remember to support your argument with information you have read or viewed in a video, observations you have made, or with personal experiences.

Would You Like to Be a Wild Animal Keeper?

Prompt Source(s):	0	Source Lexile Range:	N/A
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A wild animal keeper is in charge of taking care of animals in a zoo. This person is responsible for feeding the animals, keeping them healthy, and providing visitors with information. Would you like this job?

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss whether you would or would not like to be a wild animal keeper. Make sure to use details and examples to support your argument.

Writing: The Best Invention Ever

Prompt Source(s): 0

Source Lexile Range: N/A

Imagine that you live in the Ice Age, and you and your tribe are trekking across the tundra of what are now the Himalayan Mountains, looking for shelter. A white wall of blinding sleet is making your search nearly impossible. Suddenly, a saber tooth tiger leaps out and attacks your tribe. You could not have known that the ferocious beast lived in that area, because there were not any signs to warn you. Just picture how life would have been different if there were signs posted with: Danger-Saber tooth tigers on the loose! The invention of writing enables us to share information in many ways, including through signs, newspapers, books, and blogs.

In a well-developed essay, explain why you think writing is the best invention ever. Use facts and examples to support your views.

Index for Source-based and Non-source-based Prompts

The appendices that follow provide lists of prompts with different types of sources. These appendices are intended to assist teachers in more easily identifying and locating prompts in the catalog. Each appendix includes only the titles of prompts from this catalog. Prompts are arranged in alphabetical order in the catalog by type (IntelliMetric™ or Pilot), as indicated in the Table of Contents. The appendices are divided into two main categories: source-based (including research-based and quotation-based prompts) and non-source-based prompts. The first three appendices are for source-based prompts; the last appendix is for non-source-based prompts. The following are notes pertaining to the definitions and content specifications of source-based and non-source based prompts.

Source-based Prompts:

- Source-based prompts are research-based and often require sources (whether specified or not) and include quotation-based writing tasks.
- Some source-based prompts provide or indicate specific sources while others require students and/or teachers to conduct their own research to address a prompt topic.
- Quotation-based prompts require reference to, analysis of, and/or interpretation of a particular quotation.
 - Most quotation-based prompts integrate quotations into the prompt task rather than offer the quotation as a separate source.
 - Quotations are typically too brief compared to most sources or excerpts from works that are more extensive; thus they are usually not considered a formal ‘source’ for students to use in addressing a prompt task.
 - To prevent inaccuracy, Lexile levels for quotations are not provided due to the brevity of most quotations.
- The types of sources used in source-based prompts vary greatly by prompt and can include multimedia and text-based sources.

Non-source-based Prompts:

- Non-source-based prompts do not require or necessitate research and/or source-based evidence to complete the writing task.
- Most non-source-based prompts are typically knowledge, experience, and/or opinion-based prompt tasks.

Appendix I: Source-based Prompts (Sources Provided)

IntelliMetric™

Assimilation into a New Culture
Ethics and Archaeology
Helicopter Parents
Illegal Immigration
Is Napping Beneficial?
Listening to Music in Study Hall
Military Draft: Pro or Con?
Rewrite the "Yes, Virginia, ... Santa Claus" Letter
The Clean Machine
The Effects of TV
The First Amendment
"The Monkey's Paw"

Pilot

Defending the American Revolution
E-Books or Paper Books for School Libraries
Hydrogen as an Alternative Fuel
Is Milk Good for Your Health?
Seat Belts on School Buses
The Lincoln Assassination: Guilt by Association?

Appendix II: Source-based Prompts (Sources Not Provided)

IntelliMetric™

N/A¹

Pilot

Banning A Wrinkle in Time
Foster Care for Pony Boy?
"Thumbprint" by Eve Merriam

1. This type of prompt is not available at this time in MY Access!®. However, new prompts and IntelliMetric™ models are in development. Check back frequently for updates!



Appendix III: Quotation-based Prompts

IntelliMetric™

Is Honesty the Best Policy?
Recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance

Pilot

Is Imagination More Important than Knowledge?

Appendix IV: Non-source-based Prompts (Sources Not Required)

IntelliMetric™

A Four-Day School Week
A Letter to Isabella and Ferdinand
A Manned Mission to Mars
Acting Courageous or Seeking Thrills?
American Victory in the Revolutionary War
An Electronic Tablet Device for Each Student?
An Environmental Problem - HB Unit 4 Level A
An Important Issue - HB Unit 5 Level B
Animal Abuse Laws
Animal Testing
Argue For or Against Group Projects
Banning Books
Banning Dangerous Pets
Banning Extreme Sports
Breaks for Outdoor Exercise
Celebrity Role Models
Cell Phones in School
Choosing an Exotic Pet
Differences between Athens and Sparta
Do Aliens Exist?
Do Pro Athletes Deserve High Salaries?
Do You Want Fame?
Dr. John Snow and the Cholera Epidemic
Extend the School Day?
Extracurricular Activities: Beneficial or Not?
Finding an Envelope Full of Money
Funding for the Arts
Greatest American Figure
Healthier Food Options at School
Homelessness in America
Homework: Beneficial or Not?
How to Handle a Bully
Ideal Winter Getaway
iPods and MP3 Players at School
Is Lying Always Bad?
Locker Policies
Love or Money
Making Science Fiction Real
Nonviolence during the Civil Rights Movement of 1960
Persuasive Letter about Jackie Robinson
Petitioning Your Parents for a Privilege
Progress Monitoring System_MS-2
Recommend Food to the Cafeteria
Recommending Good Entertainment

Recycling
Rising to the Challenge of Cyberbullying
Salaries of Professional Athletes
School Rules: Eating in the Classroom
Separate Schools for Boys and Girls
1763-1775: Independence or Not?
Space Shuttle Mission
Spending Money
State Tests and Retention Policy
Surveillance Cameras in Public Places
Tattoos and Body Art
Teen Curfew Laws
Teenage Responsibility
The Internet as a Tool
The Same Team
The Value of Increased Cultural Awareness
Video Games for Physical Education Class
Violence on Television
Vote for Me!
Weather-Related Makeup Days
What Does Your School Need?
Winning Halloween Costume
Year-Round Schooling
Zero Tolerance Toward Weapons in School

Pilot

Ancient Traditions Influence Modern Society
Best Defender of the Amazon Rainforest
Can Failure Lead to Success?
Cesar Chavez National Holiday
Direct vs. Indirect Democracy
Discontinue Production of the Penny?
Donner Party Decisions' Impact on the Journey to California
Driverless Cars for Everyday Use?
Establish Homework Clubs?
Getting Americans to Vote
Handicapped Students and Intramural Sports
Helping the Victims of Hurricane Katrina
Highway or No Highway?
How Many Dogs is Too Many?
How Would You Change the Dress Code?
How Would You Improve Your Community?
Important to Own a Pet?
Individuals Affecting Government Actions
Jefferson vs. Hamilton on Economics or Federalism
Keep the Movie Theater Open
Learning Language Arts Using Videos
Mandatory Participation in Extracurricular Activity?
Multiple Religious Traditions in the Middle East

Opinion on having a Local Teen Center
Parking Lot Construction
Pep Rallies
Permission to Visit a Workplace
Prayer in School
Preparing for Natural Disasters
Providing the Basic Needs
Public vs. Private Schools
Resources of China, Japan, and World Economies
Ride the Magic School Bus
Rubber Tappers vs. Cattle Ranchers
School Lunches: Healthy and Tasty?
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