

The GED Ready® Practice Test – Reasoning Through Language Arts (RLA)

Extended Response Prompts and Source Texts

The enclosed source texts are drawn directly from the Extended Response (ER) tasks on the GED Ready® practice test - RLA. In those ER tasks, students are asked to analyze the relationship between a quotation and a passage in an essay-length response. We provide these source texts so that you may refer to them as your score your students' responses.

Use these source texts in conjunction with other RLA Extended Response scoring resources for educators, including the:

- Educator Scoring Tool for GED Ready® - RLA
- Extended Response Resource Guide for Educators – RLA

Both tools are available at:

<https://www.ged.com/educators-admins/teaching/classroom-materials/er-scoring-tools.html>

Things to keep in mind when using these materials:

1. The stimulus materials for the versions of the GED Ready® practice test - RLA are included. You can determine which version of the test your students took by reviewing their written responses.
2. Students' written responses are available in each student's Enhanced Score Report under the "Review My Written Answers" section. Ask each student to print out his or her score report and give you a copy, which you can then use to score the response.
3. Only use these source texts for the purpose of scoring student GED Ready® practice test responses. If you give students these source texts before taking the GED Ready® practice test, it may compromise the accuracy of their scores and the ability of the GED Ready® practice test to predict their scores on the operational GED® test.

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Stimulus Material: GED Ready® RLA
Diamond Mining

Diamond Mining: Harmful to the Environment
By Tavin McLeavitt

- 1 The diamond mining industry directly affects an estimated 10 million people around the world. Eleven nations are currently considered major producers of diamonds, and several other countries also currently operate diamond mines. While some companies and countries have made a fortune from diamond mining, the diamond mining industry as a whole has a long history of abusing human rights and exploiting workers. The industry's devastating impact on the environment is another reason why diamond mining should be banned.
- 2 During any mining process, the soil, water, and air surrounding a mine become polluted. Diamond mining is no different. Large quantities of soil must be removed, reducing available natural land resources. For example, the process of removing soil along the coast forever changes shorelines, which has a wide-ranging impact. In addition, any mine's expansion encroaches on natural animal habitats, decreasing wildlife populations.
- 3 Diamond mining also affects water supply and quality. Water is used to extract diamonds, but water is a scarce resource in Africa, where many of the world's diamond mines are located. Many countries cannot afford to trade a necessity like clean water for a luxury like diamonds. Canada's Northwest Territories provides an example of how water is affected by diamond mining. Companies have drained twenty lakes, causing massive changes to the environment and disrupting the natural habitats of many species. Caribou in the Northwest Territories appear to be migrating away from traditional habitats that have been disturbed by diamond mining operations.
- 4 Finally, energy sources used to operate diamond mines create greenhouse gases. Diesel fuels, electricity, and hydrocarbons used in diamond mining all release harmful carbons into the air. These chemicals cause smog, climate change, and other environmental hazards yet to be discovered. The long-term environmental impact is simply not worth the financial gains a few corporations and countries desire.

Diamond Mining Companies Find New Ways to Preserve the Environment
by Shaunna Rangel

- 5 The diamond mining industry is not the environmental villain it is often portrayed to be. Although any mining operation for any important mineral can disturb delicate ecology, diamond mining companies have proven to be responsive to public concern and have worked hard to reduce the impact of their search for what could be argued as the world's most precious and symbolic resource. World governments are cooperating to ensure environmental safety and preservation around diamond mines. In some cases, areas surrounding the mines are actually improved!
- 6 A number of wildlife preserves have been established to protect and breed species of animals endangered by diamond mines. For example, the Diavik Diamond Mine in Canada has implemented an advisory board to study ways to protect the fish near the mining area. The program was so successful that it has widened to include the arctic deer. In South Africa, the national parks system has worked together with the Peace Parks Foundation and the diamond industry to set up a conservation area for wildlife near the Venetia Diamond Mine.
- 7 Governments are trying to reduce waste and reuse resources while mining for diamonds. Environmental management companies closely monitor the mines and routinely publish reports on their environmental impact. Many of the mines even do more than the minimum required by regulated standards. A number of mine operators restore topsoil removed from a mining site. Researchers are working on new, less water-intensive methods of diamond extraction. Measures to use energy sources that do not emit dangerous carbons into the air have been put into place, and the levels of chemicals that reach the air are closely monitored. With support and regulation from governments, the mining industry can safely continue to benefit a large number of people who live in the countries where diamonds are mined.

Prompt

While opponents of diamond mining believe that the hazards associated with the industry should lead to a ban, proponents argue that companies are sufficiently improving practices and addressing public concerns. In your response, analyze the two articles to determine which position is best supported. Use relevant and specific evidence from both articles to support your response.

Stimulus Material: GED Ready® - RLA

Plastic Bags

Saving Our City One Plastic Bag at a Time

- 1 The editorial staff at the Gulftowne Gazette says three cheers for the Gulftowne Ordinance Committee! Finally, they are serious about making reusable shopping bags mandatory in every store with Proposition 328.
- 2 Americans concerned about our environment agree that plastic bags litter our landscape and threaten wildlife. Many cities across the country and around the globe have banned their use. Paper bags are not the ideal replacement for plastic bags either. Cutting down trees to make paper greatly diminishes our forests. The actual manufacturing of paper bags contributes to pollution. The obvious solution is to mandate that consumers bring reusable bags with them when they go shopping.
- 3 Reusable bags are made from canvas or other cloth, man-made fibers, or sturdy plastic. A variety of these bags are sold at most supermarket checkout stands. Discount stores and even dollar stores sell reusable bags. These bags are lightweight, washable, and durable. Many styles can last for years. It is mind-boggling to think of how many trees would be saved and how much landfill space could be freed if all shoppers used reusable bags. A widely reported study found that the United States uses 100 billion disposable plastic shopping bags every year!
- 4 The cost to consumers to purchase reusable bags is minimal, some costing less than a dollar. Many retailers already charge fees to consumers who want their purchases placed in disposable plastic or paper shopping bags. While these fees are small, paying for one-time use bags on a weekly basis adds up. Eventually, the purchase of reusable bags is more cost-effective.
- 5 Those opposing the mandatory use of reusable shopping bags cite health concerns as their reason. They base their fears on a study conducted at the University of Arizona and Loma Linda University, which showed reusable bags to have unacceptable levels of bacteria growth and mold after being used to haul groceries, this issue can easily be addressed by washing the bags frequently. Using separate bags for meats and produce also reduces the chance of contaminating food placed in reusable bags.
- 6 Wake up, Gulftowne. Let 's all follow the ordinance committee's lead and finally put an end to the "paper or plastic" quest ion. Making a long-term investment now by purchasing reusable bags creates a win-win situation for our citizens and our environment.

Letter to the Editor

- 7 I strongly disagree with your editorial earlier this week on the new reusable bag ordinance. Shop owners in Gulftowne rely on tourists to make a living. Unfortunately, it appears the Ordinance Committee did not think beyond the grocery store when considering this terrible ordinance.
- 8 I own a gift shop. Tourists buy mementos, figurines, t-shirts, postcards and beach supplies. Many vacation purchases fit into bags no larger than an envelope. Requiring our visitors to bring reusable bags for such purchases makes absolutely no sense.
- 9 Most shop owners cannot afford to provide reusable bags to customers. The bags used now have logos, addresses, phone numbers, and website addresses. They are not free. Where in the ordinance is the cost to make new multi-sized bags with store information? Where is the investment in our community businesses?
- 10 Shop owners are also concerned about the environment, but we don't want tourists shopping in the next town where paper and plastic bags are still used to avoid this hassle. People come to Gulftowne to enjoy the beach and for relaxation. Why complicate their days and add an expense that makes them buy a bag for their purchases? This requirement may make sense in a grocery store, where most disposable bags are handed out anyway, but penalizing other types of shops who don't really contribute to the problem is unacceptable.
- 11 If this ordinance goes into effect, I hope the committee plans to add a few words to our city welcome sign: "Bring Your Own Bags".

Theo Jones
Owner, Gulftowne Gifts

Prompt

Some cities are beginning to address the environmental concerns associated with paper and plastic bag use, but not everyone agrees about what should be done. In your response, analyze both the editorial and the letter to the editor to determine which position is best supported. Use relevant and specific evidence from both sources to support your response.

Stimulus Material: GED Ready® - RLA

Automated Traffic Lights

Speech: Proposal for Automatic Traffic Light Cameras
by Councilman Lorenzo Hart
Baler Town Council meeting

Fellow council members:

- 1 The cuts to this year's budget mean that fewer funds are available for many town departments. We must thoughtfully examine how to use our resources most effectively. I propose installing automatic traffic light cameras at 10 major intersections in town.
- 2 Clearly, monitoring intersections is a public safety concern that lends itself to technology. Automatic traffic cameras photograph the license plates of automobiles running red lights. The town then sends traffic tickets to the violators. Automating this process will allow our police officers to focus on duties that require human attention, saving the cost of hiring additional officers.
- 3 Beyond the practical advantage, automatic traffic cameras have well-documented benefits. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration states that running red lights causes hundreds of traffic fatalities and thousands of injuries annually. According to a 2010 report by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, red-light cameras have lowered these numbers in hundreds of U.S. cities. A 2005 Federal Highway Administration study found a 25% decrease in front-into-side auto accidents in seven cities that use red-light cameras.
- 4 Currently, drivers who get away with red-light violations tend to repeat the behavior, making intersections less safe overall. Automatic cameras discourage this habit. A 2009 study of a program in Montgomery County, Maryland, showed an average 78% decline in the number of red-light tickets issued after the cameras had operated for a year. Only about one-third of the drivers who each received a red-light violation ticket repeated the violation within a two-year period.
- 5 In addition, by citing violators who may have gone unpunished without the assistance of the cameras, our town would increase revenue through additional traffic fines. A single intersection in Lawrence Township, New Jersey, generated over \$1 million in fines in only one year. The facts show that an investment in these cameras pays for itself. Please support this proposal.

Letter to the Editor: Automatic Cameras Not an Automatic Solution

Baler Herald

April 8

- 6 The town council's proposal to install 10 automatic red-light cameras at traffic lights is a proposal to waste money. I have scrutinized the details and calculated the costs. The proposal does say that the company AutoCamera Inc. has promised to waive installation fees that would normally run \$50,000–\$100,000 per intersection. However, that same company will charge us \$5,000–\$6,000 *each month per camera* to operate and maintain the cameras. That is at least \$60,000 per year for *one camera*. Installing 10 cameras will have quite a high price tag. Six hundred thousand dollars per year could instead pay the salaries of new officers.
- 7 These cameras create other unexpected costs as well. In New Jersey and New York, several cities have been sued over the timing of traffic lights with automatic cameras. Plaintiffs often contend that the yellow lights are illegally short and that required inspections of the cameras were not performed. Lawsuits over automatic cameras are all too common, occurring also in states such as Ohio, Illinois, Missouri, and California. In a single December in New Jersey alone, traffic light company ATS settled 16 separate class-action lawsuits. Because we cannot control public reaction to these cameras, the real costs are hidden. Any new fines collected may pale in comparison to increased legal fees.
- 8 Additionally, the safety benefits of automatic red-light cameras are unclear. A 2005 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration report says that some cities using the cameras have seen a decrease in front-into-side accidents, but rear-end collisions have increased. Apparently, speeding drivers notice the cameras at the last minute. They apply their brakes abruptly, surprising the unsuspecting drivers behind them and causing accidents. These additional collisions are avoidable if we reject this proposal.
- 9 In every way, actual traffic police officers are superior to automatic red-light cameras. The only investment we need to make is hiring more officers.

Madison Caan, civil engineer
Baler

Prompt

Analyze the arguments presented in the speech and the letter to the editor.

In your response, develop an argument in which you explain how one position is better supported than the other. Incorporate relevant and specific evidence from both sources to support your argument.

Remember, the better-argued position is not necessarily the position with which you agree. This task should take approximately 45 minutes to complete.

Stimulus Material: GED Ready® - RLA

Are Professional Athletes Overpaid?

Current Issues Blog

NO

by Jennifer Fontaine, sports promoter

- 1 In the United States, sports are big business. That's \$435 billion-per-year big, according to a 2012 market research estimate of the entire sports industry. The center of this business is professional athletes. They are the ones making the diving catches, bone-crushing tackles, and clutch three-point shots at the buzzer that thrill us all. They are the reason a fan pays \$1,000 for a playoff ticket. An athlete's salary is determined by basic math. If a sport pulls in billions of dollars, high salaries are paid out. That is the business of sports.
- 2 Additionally, the size of athletes' salaries is often exaggerated. Few actually earn tens of millions of dollars a year. In 2010 and 2011, the average professional athlete's annual salary was \$1.9 million for football, \$3.34 million for baseball, and \$5.15 million for basketball. While some superstars do earn \$30 million, \$40 million, or even \$50 million, those players are the best of the best, imbued with rare talents. Amateurs playing catch in the backyard should not delude themselves into thinking such abilities come easily.
- 3 Professional athletes work harder than people in almost any other profession. They perfect their skills during years of grueling training. The few who make the pros must train even more. Then, after all that work, athletes' careers are relatively short. Compare a baseball player's \$3 million a year for only a few seasons to a highly paid doctor's \$500,000 a year for 40 or more years. The athlete's pay no longer seems excessive. And injuries, which are all too frequent, can end a career prematurely. Some athletes will literally pay for knee, back, or head injuries for the rest of their lives. Treatments such as knee-replacement surgery can cost tens of thousands of dollars.
- 4 Being an athlete comes at a heavy physical price. Yet professional athletes choose to play the game—for us, the fans and ticketholders. Their physical feats inspire the young children watching games on TV to reach for greatness themselves. Who can deny the value of that?

YES

by Roberto Hinojosa, high school math teacher

- 5 Without teachers, police officers, and firefighters, our society would collapse. And yet these professionals are paid a tiny fraction of the salaries earned by many professional athletes. This makes no sense whatsoever.
- 6 Those who most support our way of life by protecting and educating our citizens should be paid more than athletes. Teachers not only inspire and motivate youngsters but also impart the knowledge that helps children and teenagers become productive adults. Athletes, on the other hand, are nothing more than highly paid entertainers; they serve no important function in the future well-being of our country.
- 7 The average U.S. household income in 2012 was \$54,000. Consider these average salaries for 2012:
 - for a teacher, \$50,950
 - for a police officer, \$50,512
 - for a lead firefighter, \$57,000
- 8 Now compare those averages with the highest professional athlete salaries in the same year:
 - for football, \$32.4 million
 - for baseball, \$31 million
 - for basketball, \$20.3 million
- 9 While many Americans are struggling to make ends meet and find good jobs, it is frustrating to read about yet another athlete holding out for a few million dollars more. Nothing justifies paying one person a yearly salary that is more than most people make in a lifetime. For modest salaries, police officers and firefighters protect our lives and property at great risk to themselves. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), 4,325 on-duty firefighters lost their lives in the United States from 1977 through 2011. Very few professional athletes died on the job during that same time.
- 10 Teachers and public servants should be paid at least as much as athletes. Otherwise, the message our society sends is that we value entertainment more than real, meaningful work.

Prompt

In your response, develop an argument in which you explain how one position is better supported than the other. Incorporate relevant and specific evidence from both sources to support your argument.

Remember, the better-argued position is not necessarily the position with which you agree. This task should take approximately 45 minutes to complete.

Resources:

- Source Documentation <http://bleacherreport.com/articles/1089195-two-sides-to-every-coin-are-professional-athletes-overpaid>
- salaries.com
- <http://www.indeed.com/salary/Firefighter.html>
- <http://www.overpaidathletes.net/page1.html>
- <http://www.parade.com/what-people-earn/slideshows/celebrity-salaries.html#?slideindex=3>
- <http://www.primesport.com/e/Sports/Super-Bowl-Tickets/MetLife-Stadium/February-02-2014-1000088511>
- <http://apps.usfa.fema.gov/firefighter-fatalities/fatalityData/statistics>
- <http://www.plunkettresearch.com/sports-recreation-leisure-market-research/industry-and-business-data/statistics>
- <http://www.plunkettresearch.com/sports-recreation-leisure-market-research/industry-statistics>
- Estimated Size of the Entire Sports Industry, U.S. 435 Bil. US\$ 2012
- <http://www.forbes.com/athletes/list/>
- http://www.nba.com/2011/news/features/steve_aschburner/08/19/average-salary/index.html [source for average salaries]