

## English II: Sample Paper for Science Fiction/Technology prompt

Over 3.8 billion people are on the internet today, and that number continues to grow. With the reach of the internet and technology in the 21st century, this could lead the way for mass censorship or government control. Ray Bradbury explored this idea in many of his works, but more importantly, his quote, "Many of the works depict a future government that controls its people by eliminating mental stimulation and warn of controlling trends in society" gives us food for thought about the repercussions of allowing our information to get in the hands of the government. This thought is also touched on in many fiction and nonfiction pieces of literature. These works unite to share a common theme that the widespread use of technology in society corrupts people's perspective on the authenticity of the real world.

One example of government control in fiction is the short story "Harrison Bergeron" by Kurt Vonnegut. Vonnegut goes into detail about a dystopian future where everyone is kept equal due to government regulations. In the story, the protagonists George and Hazel are having a conversation about George's handicap and how they could cheat it by letting some weights out. George responds with, "Then other people'd get away with it-and pretty soon we'd be right back in the dark ages again, with everybody competing against everybody else. You wouldn't like that, would you?" (Vonnegut 4). George's character has been taught over and over by the government through all his life to follow the rules; he would rather live in eternal discomfort and fear than momentary freedom. This shows the extent of the control of the powerful people and how miniscule the citizens are. They have no hope in their society. Later on in the story Harrison Bergeron is killed in cold blood on live television, for the world to see. His parents view the murder of their only child and are seemingly unchanged, moments after the slaughter

takes place. Vonnegut writes, “‘I forgot,’ she said. ‘Something real sad on television’” (Vonnegut 8). The Bergerons knew what had happened and were crying, but because of their handicaps and mental limitations, they couldn’t remember what took place that day. Without the mental freedoms and creativity of a normal, functioning society everyone thinks and feels the same. Harrison tried to free their minds, but even an elaborate display of greatness couldn’t break the people free from the government’s control.

Another example of this idea is the fictional short story, “The Pedestrian” by Ray Bradbury. Bradbury tells of a lonely citizen walking the deserted streets of a society numbed by the reach of technology and television. As Leonard Mead, the protagonist, walks alone, Bradbury fills the atmosphere with descriptive language: “To put your feet upon that buckling concrete walk, to step over grassy seams and make your way, hands in pockets, through the silences, that was what Mr. Leonard Mead most dearly loved to do” (Bradbury 1). The streets of this town have been abandoned and left for Mother Nature to deal with. Mead Leonard is the only one who walks now and it’s the only thing that brings him happiness. Mead is an outlier in his world, and only for that reason. Bradbury continues later on, “They passed one house on one street a moment later, one house in an entire city of houses that were dark, but this one particular house had all of its electric lights brightly lit, every window a loud yellow illumination, square and warm in the cool darkness” (Bradbury 22). Leonard’s house, the only illuminated house, was a sign of his individuality, resisting the urges and norms of society and becoming his own person. He didn’t need the television or fancy technology to have happiness. He found his happiness in the simple things, and that was all taken away from him. This signals the complete end of individuality, the end of freedoms in this culture. A sad day for Mr. Leonard Mead.

Not only does this idea appear in the minds of great writers and dreamers, but in our real world lives today. Earlier this year in a TED Talk that took place in Seattle, speaker Kirk Grogen shows the warning signs of how data of consumers is being used in unimaginable ways. Grogen talks about that reaches of data tracking and how much info these companies have on us. Grogen says, "Way back in 2010, using only shopper-loyalty cards, retailers could track consumers' purchases so well, they were able to determine the likelihood of a woman being pregnant, before that woman knew she was pregnant herself." The advancement of the systems of the store could recognize and predict these patterns so quickly, it beat medical professionals and the woman herself. These programs are getting so far ahead, that they are able to think better than humans with only one dimensional information on a consumer. This could lead to danger, though. With this much advancement, the program could start to manipulate to consumer in ways we would never perceive. Grogen continues about that dark side of that data tracking: "What if your behavior is being modified, without your conscious knowledge?" People can be manipulated by companies and machines to end up thinking different things based on these narratives.

The widespread use of technology in society blinds people from reality and how the real world works. This idea is explored by many authors and aspects of our society nowadays. Ray Bradbury in particular explores this idea in the previously mentioned quote. As the technology in the world continues to advance and broaden its reach, big companies and governments could take control of the common people. It's up to the citizens to wake up and realize the severity of the situation.



# Common Core All-Subject Writing Rubric

10th grade sample

Writing Type(circle one): Argumentative

(Informative/Explanatory)

Narrative (ELA only)

<b>CONTENT X4</b>	The writing has a sharp focus and clarity of purpose. The ideas are developed with examples and specific details including textual evidence and are thoroughly elaborated. All elements of the prompt are addressed.	The writing has a clear central idea and a clear focus. Ideas are developed with textual evidence, even though the development may be uneven. Information is relevant. Most elements of the prompt are addressed.	The writing has a vague central idea; there are shifts in focus or digressions. Ideas are listed, information may be incomplete or irrelevant, textual evidence may be lacking, and there is little development. Some elements of the prompt are <u>not</u> addressed.	The writing has unclear or confusing ideas. The ideas are missing relevant information, there is not enough information, or there is little or no development, and little textual evidence. Significant elements of the prompt are <u>not</u> addressed.	<b>X4</b>
<b>ORGAN- IZATION</b>	There is a beginning, middle, and end in the writing with strong transitions between ideas. Ideas are presented in a logical order and there is a sense of completion about the writing.	There is a beginning, middle, and end in the writing with simple transitions between ideas. Ideas are presented in a logical order and the writing may have a weak ending.	There is a weak beginning, middle, and end with gaps in ideas. Ideas are presented in random order, there may be significant repetition, and the writing may have no ending.	There is no beginning or end with severe gaps in ideas. Ideas are presented in a random or repetitive order. There may be too little information to demonstrate organization.	
<b>SPELLING &amp; GRAMMAR (Conventions)</b>	The writing exhibits superior control over grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. If there are errors present, they do not appear to be part of a pattern of errors.	The writing exhibits proper control over grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. If there are errors present, they do not appear to be a part of a pattern of errors.	The writing exhibits weak control over grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. The errors minimally affect the meaning of the writing.	The writing exhibits little to no control over grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. The errors greatly affect the meaning of the writing.	
Teacher Feedback:				<b>Total Points Earned</b>	
				<b>Score</b>	4

This essay scored a 4. The student's response provides thorough and convincing support and evidence that includes important details from both the fictional stories and the Ted Talk. The essay is structured in a clear, sophisticated way and its effective style enhances the content. The essay is also nearly free of any grammatical or punctuation errors. The student's introduction provides a clear and defensible thesis statement, and the writer was able to conclude the essay with a logical progression of ideas.