

TCAP Writing Pilot TCAP/WA

DIRECTIONS

In a few moments, you will see a passage(s) and a prompt. You are to plan and write an essay about the passage(s) according to the instructions provided in the prompt. This activity will show how well you write. Express your thoughts clearly and make your writing interesting to the reader. Your essay will be scored as a rough draft, but you should watch for careless errors.

Before writing, spend some time reading the passage(s), thinking about the prompt, and planning your thoughts.

WRITE ONLY ON THE PROMPT AND PASSAGE(S) YOU ARE GIVEN.

The time you have for writing is 60 minutes.

**PROMPT I – GRADE 11 WRITING ASSESSMENT
TENNESSEE COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM (TCAP)
2012 PILOT TEST**

Following is an excerpt from an essay arguing that people accumulate too many useless things.

from “The Tyranny of Things” (1917)
by Elizabeth Morris

Two fifteen-year-old girls stood eyeing one another on first acquaintance. Finally one little girl said, “Which do you like best, people or things?” The other little girl said, “Things.” They were friends at once.

I suppose we all go through a phase when we like things best; and not only like them, but want to possess them under our hand. The passion for accumulation is upon us. We make “collections,” we fill our rooms, our walls, our tables, our desks, with things, things, things.

Many people never pass out of this phase. They never see a flower without wanting to pick it and put it in a vase, they never enjoy a book without wanting to own it, nor a picture without wanting to hang it on their walls. They keep photographs of all their friends and kodak albums of all the places they visit, they save all their theater programmes and dinner cards, they bring home all their alpenstocks.¹ Their houses are filled with an undigested mass of things, like the terminal moraine² where a glacier dumps at length everything it has picked up during its progress through the lands.

But to some of us a day comes when we begin to grow weary of things. We realize that we do not possess them; they possess us. Our books are a burden to us, our pictures have destroyed every restful wall-space, our china is a care, our photographs drive us mad, our programmes and alpenstocks fill us with loathing. We feel stifled with the sense of things, and our problem becomes, not how much we can accumulate, but how much we can do without. We send our books to the village library, and our pictures to the college settlement. Such things as we cannot give away, and have not the courage to destroy, we stack in the garret,³ where they lie huddled in dim and dusty heaps, removed from our sight, to be sure, yet still faintly importunate.⁴

¹ **alpenstocks:** wooden poles used for hiking

² **moraine:** a mass of debris left by a retreating glacier

³ **garret:** attic

⁴ **importunate:** demanding attention

Then, as we breathe more freely in the clear space that we have made for ourselves, we grow aware that we must not relax our vigilance, or we shall be once more overwhelmed.

For it is an age of things. As I walk through the shops at Christmas time and survey their contents, I find it a most depressing spectacle. All of us have too many things already, and here are more! And everybody is going to send some of them to everybody else! I sympathize with one of my friends, who, at the end of the Christmas festivities, said, "If I see another bit of tissue paper and red ribbon, I shall scream."

It extends to all our doings. For every event there is a "souvenir." We cannot go to luncheon and meet our friends but we must receive a token to carry away. Even our children cannot have a birthday party, and play games, and eat good things, and be happy. The host must receive gifts from every little guest, and provide in return some little remembrance for each to take home. Truly, on all sides we are beset, and we go lumbering along through life like a ship encrusted with barnacles, which can never cut the waves clean and sure and swift until she has been scraped bare again. And there seems little hope for us this side our last port.

And to think that there was a time when folk had not even that hope! When a man's possessions were burned with him, so that he might, forsooth, have them all about him in the next world! Suffocating thought! To think one could not even then be clear of things, and make at least a fresh start! That must, indeed, have been in the childhood of the race.

from "The Tyranny of Things," by Elizabeth Morris. Public Domain.

READ THIS WRITING PROMPT CAREFULLY BEFORE YOU BEGIN YOUR WRITING.

“Things”

Write a narrative essay relating your own experiences to the points the author makes in the passage. Perhaps you or someone in your family have accumulated too much; if this has not been your experience, picture a time when it might be. Using the information from the passage, follow your life as you go through phases of accumulation and clearing out. Develop your narrative using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences, and be sure to include references to the passage in your response.

You may use the space below for prewriting. However, only the lined pages of your answer document will be scored. You will have a time limit of 60 minutes.

This writing prompt must be returned with all test material.