Student Name _____
(Please Print)

Grade 11

Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP)

Writing Assessment 2014 Operational Test

State of Tennessee Department of Education

TNCore

TCAP Writing Operational Test
TCAP/WA

DIRECTIONS

Today you will be taking the **Grade 11 Writing Assessment**. The test is made up of two texts and two prompts. For each prompt, you are to plan and write an essay about the text(s) according to the instructions provided. This activity will show how well you write. Express your thoughts clearly and make your writing interesting to the reader. Your essays will be scored as rough drafts, but you should watch for careless errors.

There are some important things to remember as you complete the test:

- The time you have for reading the first text and writing on the first prompt is 60 minutes. After 60 minutes, you will take a break from writing. You may return to edit your response later as part of the second 60-minute session, if you have time.
- Read each prompt carefully and think about the best way to answer it.
- Write only about the texts and prompts you are given.
- You may use the blank paper provided to you for pre-writing activities and notes, but only responses written on pages 3–6 and 8–13 of your answer document will be scored.
- If you do not know the answer to a prompt, skip it and go on to the next prompt. You may return to it later if there is time.

Writing Assessment Introduction

Happiness is an elusive concept. Researchers have long studied it, focusing their attentions on questions such as: What is it? Can it be measured, and if so, how? What does it mean to be happy? Can we increase our happiness? What influences our level of happiness?

During this assessment, you will read two texts that delineate two perspectives about the concept of happiness.

Writing Assessment Texts

Two texts will be used with this set of writing prompts:

- Text 1: “The Futile Pursuit of Happiness” by Jon Gertner
- Text 2: “Positive Psychology: The Science of Happiness” by Michael Mendelsohn

Writing Assessment Prompts

Two writing prompts have been provided:

- Analytic Summary of Text 1
- Analysis of Texts 1 and 2

GRADE 11 WRITING ASSESSMENT
TENNESSEE COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM (TCAP)
2014 OPERATIONAL TEST
WRITING PROMPT 1

Please read the following text.

The Futile Pursuit of Happiness

by Jon Gertner

If Daniel Gilbert is right, then you are wrong. That is to say, if Daniel Gilbert is right, then you are wrong to believe that a new car will make you as happy as you imagine. . . . That's because when it comes to predicting exactly how you will feel in the future, you are most likely wrong.

A professor in Harvard's department of psychology, Gilbert likes to tell people that he studies happiness. But it would be more precise to say that Gilbert—along with the psychologist Tim Wilson of the University of Virginia, the economist George Loewenstein of Carnegie-Mellon and the psychologist (and Nobel laureate in economics) Daniel Kahneman of Princeton—has taken the lead in studying a specific type of emotional and behavioral prediction. In the past few years, these four men have begun to question the decision-making process that shapes our sense of well-being: how do we predict what will make us happy or unhappy—and then how do we feel after the actual experience? . . .

Until recently, this was uncharted territory. How we forecast our feelings, and whether those predictions match our future emotional states, had never been the stuff of laboratory research. But in scores of experiments, Gilbert, Wilson, Kahneman and Loewenstein have made a slew of observations and conclusions that undermine a number of fundamental assumptions: namely, that we humans understand what we want and are adept at improving our well-being. . . . To understand affective forecasting, as Gilbert has termed these studies, is to wonder if everything you have ever thought about life choices, and about happiness, has been at the least somewhat naïve and, at worst, greatly mistaken.

The problem, as Gilbert and company have come to discover, is that we falter when it comes to imagining how we will feel about something in the future. . . . What Gilbert has found . . . is that we overestimate the intensity and the duration of our emotional reactions—our "affect"—to future events. In other words, we might believe that a new BMW will make life perfect. But it will almost certainly be less exciting than we anticipated; nor will it excite us for as long as predicted. The vast majority of Gilbert's

test participants through the years have consistently made just these sorts of errors both in the laboratory and in real-life situations. . . . On average, bad events proved less intense and more transient than test participants predicted. Good events proved less intense and briefer as well.

Gilbert and his collaborator Tim Wilson call the gap between what we predict and what we ultimately experience the "impact bias"—"impact" meaning the errors we make in estimating both the intensity and duration of our emotions and "bias" our tendency to err. The phrase characterizes how we experience the dimming excitement over not just a BMW but also over any object or event that we presume will make us happy. . . . You may have high hopes, but the impact bias suggests that it will almost certainly be less cool, and in a shorter time, than you imagine. Worse, Gilbert has noted that these mistakes of expectation can lead directly to mistakes in choosing what we think will give us pleasure. He calls this "miswanting." . . .

"You know, the Stones said, 'You can't always get what you want,'" Gilbert adds. "I don't think that's the problem. The problem is you can't always know what you want." . . .

"People ask why I study happiness," Gilbert says, "and I say, 'Why study anything else?' It's the holy grail. We're studying the thing that all human action is directed toward."

One experiment of Gilbert's had students in a photography class at Harvard choose two favorite pictures from among those they had just taken and then relinquish one to the teacher. Some students were told their choices were permanent; others were told they could exchange their prints after several days. As it turned out, those who had time to change their minds were less pleased with their decisions than those whose choices were irrevocable.

Much of Gilbert's research is in this vein. Another recent study asked whether transit riders in Boston who narrowly missed their trains experienced the self-blame that people tend to predict they'll feel in this situation. (They did not.) . . .

All of these studies establish the links between prediction, decision making and well-being. The photography experiment challenges our common assumption that we would be happier with the option to change our minds when in fact we're happier with closure. The transit experiment demonstrates that we tend to err in estimating our regret over missed opportunities. . . .

Gilbert does not believe all forecasting mistakes lead to similar results; a death in the family, a new gym membership and a new husband are not the same, but in how they affect our well-being they are similar. "Our research simply says that whether it's the

thing that matters or the thing that doesn't, both of them matter less than you think they will," he says. "Things that happen to you or that you buy or own—as much as you think they make a difference to your happiness, you're wrong by a certain amount. You're overestimating how much of a difference they make. None of them make the difference you think. And that's true of positive and negative events."

Much of the work of Kahneman, Loewenstein, Gilbert and Wilson takes its cue from the concept of adaptation, a term psychologists have used since at least the 1950's to refer to how we acclimate to changing circumstances. George Loewenstein sums up this human capacity as follows: "Happiness is a signal that our brains use to motivate us to do certain things. And in the same way that our eye adapts to different levels of illumination, we're designed to kind of go back to the happiness set point. Our brains are not trying to be happy. Our brains are trying to regulate us." In this respect, the tendency toward adaptation suggests why the impact bias is so pervasive. As Tim Wilson says: "We don't realize how quickly we will adapt to a pleasurable event and make it the backdrop of our lives. When any event occurs to us, we make it ordinary. And through becoming ordinary, we lose our pleasure."

It is easy to overlook something new and crucial in what Wilson is saying. Not that we invariably lose interest in bright and shiny things over time—this is a long-known trait—but that we're generally unable to recognize that we adapt to new circumstances and therefore fail to incorporate this fact into our decisions. So, yes, we will adapt to the BMW and the plasma TV, since we adapt to virtually everything. But Wilson and Gilbert and others have shown that we seem unable to predict that we will adapt. Thus, when we find the pleasure derived from a thing diminishing, we move on to the next thing or event and almost certainly make another error of prediction, and then another, ad infinitum. . . .

While Gilbert's most notable contribution to affective forecasting is the impact bias, Loewenstein's is something called the "empathy gap."

Here's how it expresses itself. In a recent experiment, Loewenstein tried to find out how likely people might be to dance alone to Rick James's "Super Freak" in front of a large audience. Many agreed to do so for a certain amount of money a week in advance, only to renege when the day came to take the stage. This sounds like a goof, but it gets at the fundamental difference between how we behave in "hot" states (those of anxiety, courage, fear . . . and the like) and "cold" states of rational calm. This empathy gap in thought and behavior—we cannot seem to predict how we will behave in a hot state when we are in a cold state—affects happiness in an important but somewhat less consistent way than the impact bias. "So much of our lives involves making decisions that have consequences for the future," Loewenstein says. . . .

Would a world without forecasting errors be a better world? Would a life lived without forecasting errors be a richer life? . . . The research on affective forecasting suggests that people may have little ability to anticipate their adaptation beyond the early stages." Loewenstein, along with his collaborator Dr. Peter Ubel, has done a great deal of work showing that nonpatients overestimate the displeasure of living with the loss of a limb, for instance, or paraplegia. To use affective forecasting to prove that people adapt to serious physical challenges far better and will be happier than they imagine, Loewenstein says, could prove invaluable. . . .

To Loewenstein, who is especially attendant to the friction between his emotional and deliberative processes, a life without forecasting errors would most likely be a better, happier life. "If you had a deep understanding of the impact bias and you acted on it, which is not always that easy to do, you would tend to invest your resources in the things that would make you happy," he says. This might mean taking more time with friends instead of more time for making money. He also adds that a better understanding of the empathy gap—those hot and cold states we all find ourselves in on frequent occasions—could save people from making regrettable decisions in moments of courage or craving. . . .

"But I should have learned many more lessons from my research than I actually have," Gilbert admits. "I don't think I want to give up all these motivations," he says, "that belief that there's the good and there's the bad and that this is a contest to try to get one and avoid the other. I don't think I want to learn too much from my research in that sense." . . .

"Hope and fear are enduring features of the human experience," he says, "and it is unlikely that people are going to abandon them anytime soon just because some psychologist told them they should." In fact, in his recent writings, he has wondered whether forecasting errors might somehow serve a larger functional purpose he doesn't yet understand. If he could wave a wand tomorrow and eliminate all affective-forecasting errors, I ask, would he? "The benefits of not making this error would seem to be that you get a little more happiness," he says. "When choosing between two jobs, you wouldn't sweat as much because you'd say: 'You know, I'll be happy in both. I'll adapt to either circumstance pretty well, so there's no use in killing myself for the next week.' But maybe our caricatures of the future—these overinflated assessments of how good or

bad things will be—maybe it's these illusory assessments that keep us moving in one direction over the other. Maybe we don't want a society of people who shrug and say, 'It won't really make a difference.' Maybe it's important for there to be carrots and sticks in the world, even if they are illusions," he adds. "They keep us moving towards carrots and away from sticks."

Source: "The Futile Pursuit of Happiness." By Jon Gertner, adapted from *The New York Times Magazine*. September 7, 2003. Used by permission.

READ THIS WRITING PROMPT CAREFULLY BEFORE YOU BEGIN YOUR WRITING.

Writing Prompt 1: Analytic Summary

You have read "The Futile Pursuit of Happiness" by Jon Gertner. Gertner is a journalist and author who writes about science and society. In this text, he develops several central ideas. Determine two central ideas from the text and write an essay that summarizes and analyzes how these central ideas are developed, including how they interact and build on one another over the course of the text. Cite strong and thorough evidence from the text to support your analysis. Follow the conventions of standard written English.

You may use the space below for prewriting. Extra pages for prewriting are also available after the second writing prompt, starting on page 16 of this test booklet. However, **only** the lined pages 3–6 in your answer document will be scored for this prompt. You have 60 minutes.

This test booklet must be returned with all test material.

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WRITING PROMPT 2

You have read "The Futile Pursuit of Happiness" by Jon Gertner. Now please read the following text.

Positive Psychology: The Science of Happiness

by Michael Mendelsohn

New research shows that humans have more control over their happiness than previously thought.

What exactly is happening inside the brains of people experiencing joy and happiness?

"It's a very complicated chemical soup," explained Dr. Richard Davidson, who has made a life's work out of studying "happy brains." His lab at the University of Wisconsin is devoted to understanding how much of our joy level is set at birth, and how much we can control.

With a skull cap containing 128 sensors, Davidson's team can watch a subject's brain respond to a series of photographs, some pleasant, some distressing.

"We can challenge the brain by presenting these emotional images and look to see how you respond to them," Davidson said.

ABC News' Bill Weir underwent the test, and by studying the activity in his left prefrontal cortex, Davidson discovered that Weir's brain was "more positive than not."

"Now, it doesn't mean that you don't have episodes of negative emotion," he explained. "But those negative emotions don't linger."

People with happy brains have their parents to thank, to a certain extent, not only for happy genes, but also for loving childhoods. Studies have shown that angry or critical parents can actually alter a child's happiness level until it's set around age 16. But can adults adjust their own feelings of happiness?

Happiness Interventions

Until recently, most research psychologists were more interested in what made people depressed than what made them happy, and pharmaceutical companies have played a crucial role in promoting happiness by developing very successful anti-depressants. But

evolving research in a field known as positive psychology is getting people to ask themselves how they can become happier, not through drugs, but by making changes in how they act and think.

"Antidepressants don't make people happier, they just decrease negative emotions," says University of California-Riverside psychology professor Dr. Sonja Lyubomirsky. In her new book, "The How of Happiness," Lyubomirksy argues that as much as 40 percent of our happiness "is left for the intentional activities that we can choose to engage in—the things that we do and think every day of our lives."

What are these "intentional activities"? Scientists know that happy people practice, among other things, more acts of kindness, are able to lose themselves in whatever they enjoy doing, and avoid dwelling on their problems.

Lyubomirsky has had lab subjects actually engage in some of these activities, and found that people can indeed force themselves to truly become happier. Not surprisingly, such happiness interventions take work, because people easily fall back to their genetically-determined happiness set points. Scientists have known for decades that a large part of our temperament is genetically pre-determined; by studying the personalities of identical twins they've found that about 50 percent of our happiness—or unhappiness—can be traced to our genes. Adding the 40 percent that we can control with our daily thoughts and actions still leaves about 10 percent unaccounted for. This remaining 10 percent is related to our life circumstances, such as where we live, how much money we have, our marital status, and how we look.

Hedonic Adaptation

Surprised that your life circumstances have such little influence on your happiness? Researchers have found that people eventually return to their genetically-determined happiness set points after big changes in life, as seen in lottery winners and newlyweds.

Four years ago, Caroline Johnson volunteered for the ABC show "Extreme Makeover," and received everything from a new nose to new teeth and the requisite breast implants. Did these physical improvements make her happier?

"I think about a year it made a difference," she said. "People are seeing you for the first time and they compliment you all the time. And then once it wears off, it's just normal life again."

"It's a phenomenon called hedonic adaptation," explained Lyubomirsky. "We tend to adapt to any kind of positive change . . . once you make $100,000, now you sort of change your goals. Now your goal is to make even more." Identical twins reared in the same household who do not share the same levels of happiness can also provide clues

about what it is in our lives that make us happy—the 40 percent of happiness within our control. Johnson is the perfect test case for the 40 percent theory, because she herself has an identical twin, Cat Bunnell.

After Lyubomirsky gave the sisters a battery of questionnaires she "was stunned [by] how different their scores were. Caroline got a 5.5 out of 7 . . . pretty happy," she said. "Cat scored a 3.25 . . . below the midpoint on happiness."

"They have the same DNA," explained Lyubomirsky, "and so to try to explain why one is happier than the other you have to kind of look at other factors."

One reason for the happiness difference between the twins is their outlook on life. Johnson is a self-employed dog groomer whose business hit a rough patch recently, yet she remains upbeat and committed to success. "I'm very optimistic . . . I know where I want to be," she said. "By next summer I have definite goals that I expect to meet."

Her sister has a very different outlook on life. Regarding her future, Bunnell said, "I don't feel like I'm progressing as much as I want to in my job or just the financial situation . . . It just feels like it just weighs on me too much and I just feel like I'm not going to get out of it."

"We really see major differences between the level of optimism that they have," said Lyubomirsky. "(We see) Caroline being more optimistic, Cat kind of ruminating and dwelling more on sort of bad things."

"Happiness Is Really Within Us"

Perhaps another reason why Johnson is happier than her sister is her ability to nurture relationships. Johnson is married with three children, while Bunnell is a divorced single mom, struggling with the dating scene at age 37.

"I don't have somebody that can just hold me because I'm having a hard time," said Bunnell.

Regarding her prospects for finding another husband, she said, "I feel like I'm really giving up on all that."

Besides the optimism, commitment to goals, and ability to nurture relationships that might make Johnson happier than her twin, there are many more ways to affect the 40 percent of happiness in your control.

"The happiness activities are not going to surprise anyone," Lyubomirsky said. "I mean, they're things like gratitude, forgiveness, relationships, savoring the present moment,

meditation. I try to sort of determine to what extent those things are supported by research."

Davidson would agree. He has studied the brains of Buddhist monks, men who spend their lives deliberately forcing positive emotions, and their happiness is off the charts. His new data claims that if a person sits quietly for a half-hour a day just thinking about kindness and compassion, their brain will show noticeable changes in just two weeks.

"In many ways, this is the most important idea in neuroscience in the last decade," he said. "Our brains are just waiting to be transformed, and they're always being transformed. But we can take responsibility and change the brain in more positive ways."

"Research is showing pretty convincingly now that happiness is really within us, it's not outside of us," said Lyubomirsky. "It's in what we do. It's sort of how we act, how we think every day of our lives."

Source: Mendelsohn, Michael. "Positive Psychology: The Science of Happiness." *ABC News*. Jan 11, 2008. Copyright © 2013 ABC News. Used by permission of the publisher. Retrieved from http://abcnews.go.com/Health/story?id=4115033

READ THIS WRITING PROMPT CAREFULLY BEFORE YOU BEGIN YOUR WRITING.

Writing Prompt 2: Analysis

You have now read "The Futile Pursuit of Happiness" by Jon Gertner and "Positive Psychology: The Science of Happiness" by Michael Mendelsohn, two articles on happiness. Write an essay that analyzes how Gertner and Mendelsohn each use and refine the meaning of the term happiness over the course of their articles. Be sure to also discuss the similarities and differences between their definitions. Cite strong and thorough evidence from both texts to support your analysis. Follow the conventions of standard written English.

You may use the space below for prewriting. Extra pages for pre-writing are also available on the next few pages of this test booklet. However, **only** the lined pages 8–13 in your answer document will be scored for this prompt. You have 60 minutes.

This test booklet must be returned with all test material.

You may use this area for notes ONLY. Use the lines pages in your answer document to write your essay.

You may use this area for notes ONLY. Use the lines pages in your answer document to write your essay.

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