



Considering the Writing Task

Juvenile Justice



Open a blank Google Doc and title it “Considering the Writing Task”. You will also need your reader for today.

Background Information

On June 25, 2012, the Supreme Court ruled that juveniles who committed murder could not be sentenced to life in prison because it violated the Eighth Amendment's ban on cruel and unusual punishment. Justice Elena Kagan, writing for the majority, stated that "Mandatory life without parole for a juvenile precludes consideration of his chronological age and its hallmark features—among them, immaturity, impetuosity, and failure to appreciate risks and consequences. It prevents taking into account the family and home environment that surrounds him—and from which he cannot usually extricate himself—no matter how brutal or dysfunctional."

However, four justices strongly disagreed, arguing that mandatory sentences reflected the will of American society that heinous crimes committed by juveniles should always be punished with a sentence to life in prison. Justice Alito noted that otherwise, "Even a 17 ½-year-old who sets off a bomb in a crowded mall or guns down a dozen students and teachers is a 'child' and must be given a chance to persuade a judge to permit his release into society..."

Directions

Write an essay analyzing the issues raised by these arguments. Be sure to indicate which side you most strongly agree with. Support your position, providing reasons and examples from your own experience and observations, discussions you have participated in, and texts you have read for this module. Your essay should be as clearly focused, well organized, and carefully written as you can make it.

Pre-Writing Activity

Questions such as the ones below will help you plan what you want say before you begin to draft your essay:

- Do you agree with the majority of Supreme Court justices who argued to abolish mandatory life in prison for juveniles who commit murder or with the minority who argued to retain it?
- Which author or authors that we have read support your position? What evidence do they provide?
- Which author or authors support those who disagree with you? What evidence do they provide?

Guidelines for Developing a Thesis Statement

A thesis reflects the writer's position on a question that has more than one side. After reading the thesis, the reader should be able to explain what the issue is and what side of the argument the writer is on.

- Develop a thesis statement that makes the topic and your opinion or position on the topic clear to your reader.
- Choose one side of the issue if your topic requires it, but you may qualify your position.
- If the topic asks "to what extent" you agree or disagree with a statement, be sure to explain how strongly you agree or disagree. You may include a "because" statement, but you do not need to list all the reasons for your position.
- Neither a factual statement nor a question make an effective thesis because they do not reflect the writer's position on the issue.

Effective vs. Not Effective

1. In terms of cognitive development, as research on the human brain has shown, Brazill—and any other young teen—is far from adulthood.
 - a. Is this an effective thesis? Explain your answer.
2. Juvenile offenders are young people under the age of 18 who commit crimes.
 - a. Is this an effective thesis? Explain your answer.
3. Sentencing juveniles to mandatory life in prison is necessary because it keeps them from committing more crimes. Also, it's what the families of victims want, and it holds the teen murderers accountable for what they did.
 - a. Is this an effective thesis? Explain your answer.

Effective vs. Not Effective

4. Juveniles must be held accountable for their crimes, but they must be treated differently than adults.

a. Is this an effective thesis? Explain your answer.

5. Sentencing juveniles to life in prison is both good and bad.

a. Is this an effective thesis? Explain your answer.

6. Children's crimes should not be brushed off, but it is not right to throw children who don't even understand the enormity of the crime that they have committed into the slammer for life.

a. Is this an effective thesis? Explain your answer.

Introduction Paragraph

1. Hook (capture your reader's attention!)
2. Background information about the topic you are writing about
3. Thesis statement

Your introduction paragraph should be 5-7 sentences long

Body Paragraph #1: Brain Development (Teens compared to adults)

1. Topic sentence
2. Textual evidence (in-text citation)
3. Analysis of evidence (two sentences)
4. Concluding sentence

It is important that you stay focused on the side you have taken!

Body Paragraph #2: Pick your own topic! (Maturity, home life, influences, etc.)

1. Topic sentence
2. Textual evidence (in-text citation)
3. Analysis of evidence (two sentences)
4. Concluding sentence

It is important that you stay focused on the side you have taken! (You should have a total of three body paragraphs)

Concluding Paragraph

- Your conclusion wraps up your essay in a tidy package and brings it home for your reader
- Your topic sentence should summarize what you said in your thesis statement
 - This suggests to your reader that you have accomplished what you set out to accomplish
- Do not simply restate your thesis statement, as that would be redundant
 - Rephrase the thesis statement with fresh and deeper understanding
- Your conclusion is no place to bring up new ideas
- Your supporting sentences should summarize what you have already said in the body of your essay
 - If a brilliant idea tries to sneak into the final paragraph, you must pluck it out and let it have its own paragraph in the body, or leave it out completely
- Your topic for each body paragraph should be summarized in the conclusion
 - Wrap up the main points
- Your closing sentence should help the reader feel a sense of closure
- Your closing sentence is your last word on the subject; it is your "clincher"
 - Demonstrate the importance of your ideas
 - Propel your reader to a new view of the subject
 - End on a positive note
- Your closing sentence should make your readers glad they read your paper