

UMass Lowell Writing Placement Exam, Summer 2010

You will have 50 minutes to complete your essay. Please take a few minutes to plan out your essay and to jot down a few notes. Be careful not to let the brainstorming questions take the place of good essay structure. Write as much as you can in the time allotted, and leave a few minutes at the end to proofread and edit your writing. We require a **minimum of five** fully developed paragraphs. Please use ink, and make your writing legible. Illegible essays will not be scored.

There are **two** essay options; each was inspired by the U.S. Declaration of Independence, UMass Lowell's Common Text for Fall 2010. Please read both, then **choose ONE option** for your essay. Label your essay "option one" or "option two."

Here are the criteria we will use to evaluate your writing:

- Thoughtful and detailed content responsive to the prompt
- Strong focus, essay structure and organization
- Proper grammar and use of Standard English
- Appropriate college-level vocabulary and usage

OPTION #1

Jefferson and his co-authors were resisting the exploitation of the Thirteen Colonies by the British government when they wrote The U.S. Declaration of Independence. That foundational document makes a central claim that individuals have the responsibility to resist tyranny, and it asserts the right to rebel—indeed, the necessity of rebellion—when there is sound justification. Consider this principle in light of your own experience, and write an essay that offers an example of a situation in which you felt justified in rebelling. In your thesis, set yourself up to make a clear argument that evaluates the success of your rebellion. In the body of your argument, take care to provide explicit analysis of your experience.

Here are some questions to help you get started. Remember that your essay needs to have **its own thesis and organization**; it shouldn't be merely a series of answers to these questions!

Who or what was your oppressor?

What rights of yours did you feel were infringed? What principles were you defending?

What were your grievances, and how did you express them?

What actions did you take?

What was the result—what consequences (positive, negative, or unintended) arose from your actions?

Was your rebellion productive?

Who benefited, and in what ways?

In hindsight, were your actions justified? How so?

OPTION #2

In writing The U.S. Declaration of Independence, Jefferson and his co-authors were immediately concerned with political independence from Great Britain, but given its claims about the natural rights of the individual, the Declaration invites us to think about other kinds of independence as well. Write an essay in which you define the notion of “independence” in terms of your personal choices and responsibilities as you enter college. Your thesis should set up your definition; the body of your argument should develop and refine your definition through the use of clear and specific examples.

Here are some questions to help you get started. Remember that your essay needs to have **its own thesis and organization**; it shouldn't be merely a series of answers to these questions!

What does the term "independence" mean to you? For example:

Is it about separating yourself from your family as you move to campus?

Is it about self-governance in terms of steering yourself by your own set of values?

Is it about the increased responsibility you are taking on for your own well-being?

On whom or what have you been dependent up to this point in your life? Family? Friends? Institutions?

What benefits of dependence have you enjoyed?

As you begin your college career, what value do you place on independence?

In what ways will asserting your independence help you?

How will you demonstrate your independence?

On whom might you become more dependent as you enter the University?

How might becoming more independent make you a better student?