



Practicing with Praxis Students:

Source-Based Essays

A-State Online Writing Center

While working with a Praxis tester in the Online Writing Center, it is important for tutors to help him or her focus on the test's writing prompts as much as possible, and, most importantly, help them become better writers!

An Example Prompt from ets.org:

Copyright protection grants the author of a creative work (such as a book, film, painting, or recording) the sole right to copy, publish, or profit from the work. Copyright protection lasts for a specific term. If a copyright is not renewed or if a work reaches a certain age, copyright protection no longer applies and the work is considered to be in the public domain, meaning that any person can reproduce it without paying for the right to do so. Both of the following sources address the ways in which artists create and new works and how copyright protection affects artistic creation, and particularly whether copyright protection of existing words hinders or promotes creativity.

Read the two passages carefully and then write an essay in which you identify the most important concerns regarding the issue and explain why they are important. Your essay must draw on information from BOTH of the sources. In addition, you may draw on your own experiences, observations, or reading. Be sure to CITE the sources whether you are paraphrasing or directly quoting.

Source 1

Adapted from: McLeod, Kembrew. *Freedom of Expression®: Overzealous Copyright Bozos and Other Enemies of Creativity*. New York: Doubleday,, 2005. 79-80. Web. 14 Feb. 2013.

One of the more headache-inducing aspects of the way copyright law is interpreted is the seeming randomness of it all. When writing a book, quoting from another book is perfectly acceptable . . . But quoting more than two lines from a song's lyrics in a book . . . might get you and your publisher in trouble. As long as it's brief, singing a phrase from an old song and placing it in a new song probably won't get you sued, and a court likely wouldn't consider it an infringement. However, David Sanjek--director of the Broadcast Music Incorporated (BMI) archives--is careful to point out to me that any copyright owner with an axe to grind *could* sue . . .

More mind-numbing examples from other mediums: Referring to a trademarked good in everyday conversation will cause no problem, but movie directors often have to get permission from an intellectual-property owner to show it or even mention it in movie dialogue. Referring to trademarked brands in pop songs is okay. But creating satire on a Web site by using a company logo requires you to exactly duplicate a privately owned image, and this leaves you more vulnerable to a lawsuit.

Today's unrealistically high standards of originality don't reflect the way people have always made art and music. What's the difference, really, between T. S. Eliot invoking and *directly quoting from* the Bible, Greek myths, Dante, Shakespeare, Arthurian legend, and dozens of other cultural works, and Public Enemy doing the same sort of thing with sound? There is no convincing argument I have heard that justifies why it is fine in printed works to quote small fragments from books, poems, or plays, but quoting and collaging small fragments of sound is unacceptable.

Source 2

Adapted from: Martin, Scott M. "The Mythology of the Public Domain: Exploring the Myths Behind Attacks on the Duration of the Copyright Protection." *Loyola of Los Angeles Law Review*. 36.1 (2002): 272. Web. 14 Feb. 2013.

At the risk of speaking words of heresy, it is copyright protection that *encourages* innovation and creativity, while the public domain *discourages* both innovation and creativity.

Why create something new if you can reprint or reuse something that already exists? Why invest in untested new works if you can instead distribute royalty-free existing works?

The fact that creators of new works cannot merely re-use the expression contained in copyrighted work of others without permission forces them to be creative. Composers cannot rehash the melodies created by earlier composers, they must create their own new original melodies. Writers must invent new characters and plots instead of recycling the efforts of

others. Animators and motion picture studios cannot freeload on Mickey Mouse; copyright protection forces them to create their own original cartoon characters. This promotion of fresh creation is an entirely appropriate goal for Congress to pursue through legislation.

Counter to the “copyright good, public domain better” myth, an extension of the term of copyright protection at the temporary expense of public domain *encourages* rather than *discourages* the creation of fresh new original works. Opponents of the current duration of copyright protection argue that an earlier termination of copyright protection would encourage the copyright owner to create new works rather than relying on income from old works. While such a result may ensue from earlier loss of copyright protection, if creation of fresh works is a policy goal for copyright law, is it not better to create incentives for all creators to develop new works in lieu of free-loading on existing works than it is to encourage just one party--the copyright owner--to develop new works?

Practice Prewriting with the Praxis Tutee

Read the above prompt with the Praxis tutee, as well as the two sources. Pretend he or she is going to have to write an essay for this prompt and brainstorm some ideas of addressing it together. Then, work on locating the “major concerns” of the issue, as the instructions insist. After pinpointing the concerns, both tutee and tutor can brainstorm for the essay together in various ways, such as by:

- Having an overall discussion about the topic
- Writing as a form of brainstorming; making T-charts or Venn Diagrams, etc. in order to find common concerns, issues, or facts about the topic.

After brainstorming, continue practicing the prewriting process by making a tentative outline of the essay together. **One of the most common misconceptions about the writing portion of the Praxis CORE is that the tester must write a 5-paragraph essay for both responses. THIS IS NOT TRUE.** The instructions merely say to fully answer the prompt. Testers can better manage their hour of writing time by writing a 4-paragraph essay for each response. An example is outlined below:

Paragraph 1, the introduction: Introduce the topic and the concerns surrounding it.

Paragraph 2, the first body paragraph: Discuss a fact from passage 1 regarding concern(s).

Paragraph 3, the second body paragraph: Discuss a fact from passage 2 regarding concern(s)

Paragraph 4, the conclusion: Conclusion (restate the main premise, challenge the readers about the topic or state where you think the topic will advance in the future)

(Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ONOUulafpJs>)

While brainstorming and outlining, make sure to refer back to the prompt and have the Praxis tutee point out the “verbs” that are expected of them as they write this essay. For example, in this prompt specifically, the tester is asked to “read” the passage, “identify” concerns, “explain” why these concerns are important, and “cite” evidence to back all of this information up.

(When citing, the Praxis tutee must either refer to the article title or the author’s name in the response, or they may add citations with the author’s last name, such as: (Smith)). Make sure that the Praxis tutee always focuses on these kinds of demanding verbs throughout the entire essay so that they can stay on topic as they write!

Once the Praxis tutee has practiced brainstorming and outlining, he or she will feel more comfortable with the testing process. The tutee does not have to write to this essay prompt as a full response; it is completely acceptable (and even encouraged) for them to only practice brainstorming and outlining several prompts before actually attempting to write one!

Practicing Writing a Source-Based Response

Once the Praxis tutee is comfortable breaking down source-based prompts, it is best to allow them to practice writing a full essay. **However, do not worry about timing them the first time that they attempt this.** It would be wise to look at the prompts he or she has broken down already and have him or her pick the one they feel the “strongest” about or have the most interest in. This will make them more comfortable and give them a personal drive to complete the response. The tutor can also help the tutee write out their first full response if they wish, or they can have the tutee write it independently, based on what the tutee may desire.

Going Over the Source-Based Essay Response

Once the Praxis tutee has completed a full source-based essay response, it is important to go over it with the tutee. Encourage them, tell them what they did right, and then ease into the components they could improve on. For example:

“You had great organization and clearly illustrated the concerns of the topic, but you didn’t really say why the concerns were important. Remember to dig just a little bit deeper into the sources next time!”

“Great job with discussing the topic! However, you only used one of the sources in your response. Be sure to use information from both sources!”

*Also, a helpful tip might be to let the Praxis tutee know that the source-based essay prompt says: “**In addition, you may draw on your own experiences, observations, or reading.**” Make sure that the tutee is focusing on using the information provided before they add in their own personal evidence about the topic. It is optional that they add their own voice to the source-based essay response; it is not mandatory.

Continue to encourage your tutee, and allow them to practice writing source-based responses. Whenever the tutor feels as though the Praxis tutee is ready, they can give him or her a timed-writing session to mimic the Praxis. Continue to discuss all of their responses after their completion in order for them to improve their source-based writing skills!

Source-Based Prompts to Use in Tutoring Sessions

PROMPT EXAMPLE 1 (Source: <https://magoosh.com/praxis/sample-praxis-core-writing-source-based-essay/>)

Directions: The following assignment requires you to use information from two sources to discuss concerns that relate to a specific issue. When paraphrasing or quoting from the two sources, cite each source used by referring to the author’s last name, the title, or any other clear identifier.

Prompt: Automatic teller machines (sometimes called ATMs or ATM machines) allow people to withdraw cash from their bank accounts remotely. ATM users insert their bank cards into the machine and request cash. The ATM then dispenses the cash and makes an electronic withdrawal from the user’s bank account. In this transaction, additional money is also drawn from the ATM user’s bank account in the form of ATM service fees. Both of the following sources address the relationship that ATM use has with bank accounting, and particularly whether ATM fees place an unfair financial burden on the people who use them.

Read the two passages carefully and then write an essay in which you identify the most important concerns regarding the issue and explain why they are important. Your essay must draw on information from BOTH of the sources. In addition, you may draw on your own experiences, observations, or readings. Be sure to CITE the sources whether you are paraphrasing or directly quoting.

Source 1

Adapted from: Nym, Alex. *Legal Theft: How Financial Service Fees Inhibit Capitalism*. Madison, Wisconsin: Vanity Press. 2015. 81-82. Web. 13 Jun. 2016.

It seems incredibly unfair to have to pay money just to access your own money. Unfortunately, this form of highway robbery happens millions of times every day at ATMs across the nation. What makes ATM fees the most frustrating is their unpredictable costs. The costs themselves can vary widely. One ATM may charge cardholders three or four times as much as another ATM. While these variations might theoretically create healthy competition among different privately owned ATM stations, in reality, consumers don't have the time to explore every ATM in an area and find the best deal.

It seems that the ATM's particular brand of legal theft is on the rise. Since ATM owners first began charging the bank account holders who use their machines, prices for ATM use have risen astronomically. To make matters worse, the actual bank that issues the bank card will often charge an additional fee to its hapless cardholders. This means that when someone uses an ATM to withdraw money from their bank account, they are not just charged a fee by the owner of the ATM. They pay a fee to the bank where they have their account. With this double charge, a small twenty dollar ATM withdrawal can have an additional cost of ten dollars, and sometimes more.

Aside from being unethical, ATM user fees are also financially harmful to consumers and to businesses. High ATM fees discourage people from spending money, and this means lower sales volumes at stores, restaurants, and other establishments.