

Guided Self-Placement Questionnaire

Merritt College

READING SAMPLE:

For decades, California has innovated and prospered while its public education system has drifted downward. Once known for its quality public schools, in the 2015-2016 academic year, California ranked 41st among all states in cost-of-living-adjusted per-pupil spending. Now, as inequality grows and living here becomes increasingly unaffordable, reversing the decline in public education is not about idealism — it is about the state's survival. It feels like a now-or-never moment, a final chance to commit to the public schools that have been eroded by politics, racial wariness and insufficient and invidious alternatives like charter schools. California's view of its own schools started souring in the late '70s, when voters passed Proposition 13, a state initiative billed as "tax reform" that froze property tax rates and dealt a serious blow to local school funding. The anti-tax/anti-big-government sentiment driving the measure was part of a conservative backlash that had been building since the Supreme Court's 1954 decision to desegregate public schools. Public school was no longer another site of opportunity and advancement in California, but a public space being contested by black people. Los Angeles and California shifted from being theoretically golden for all to being golden for a deserving few.

From "Saving Public Education Isn't About Idealism, but Survival" by Erin Aubry Kaplan.
New York Times, Jan. 17, 2019

A. How comfortable are you with reading at this level?

1. I can read the paragraph and discuss the ideas in it if I have a lot of help with vocabulary and understanding the meaning from my instructor.
2. I can read the paragraph and discuss the ideas in it with a little help with vocabulary and understanding the meaning from my instructor.
3. I can read the paragraph and discuss the ideas in it pretty well on my own.

B. How comfortable are you with these writing skills?

- spelling
- complete sentences
- correct verb-agreement and verb-tense usage
- punctuation use (commas, colons, semi-colons, hyphens, etc.)
- proofreading and editing my own writing

1. I know I need a lot of help with *at least three* of them.
2. I could use some help with *one or two* of them.
3. I feel pretty confident with these writing skills.

WRITING SAMPLE—[English 1A student essay, Spring 2019)

Creating nonviolent tension can possibly be an important factor in resistance and accomplishing our goals and wants. Martin Luther King Jr. writes a letter while he is incarcerated for participating in nonviolent demonstrations against segregation and speaks on the different tactics he prefers using to help his community's voices be heard. In his work, "Letter From a Birmingham Jail," King prefers to use the direct action method to get things done. Direct action is "the use of strikes, demonstrations or other public forms of protest rather than negotiating with power structures to achieve one's demand" (Google Dictionary). King explains, "Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue" (2). Organizing nonviolent tension creates something that's powerful and has a certain effect that other tactics don't. When trying to strategize on ending segregation, he is soon inspired by Socrates who "felt that it was necessary to create tension in mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal" (4). This aims to snap others into reality, to help them find their voice and stand up for themselves against those who are taking advantage of their vulnerable state of mind. Therefore, by applying direct action into his plans of abolishing segregation, King hopes to "help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood" (4). King uses direct action to bring everyone together and guide them to the truth so they can surely discover their voice and fight against segregation

C. After reading this passage, please choose the sentence that best describes you.

1. I'm not ready to write like this yet.
2. I could write at this level with help from my instructor.
3. Yes, I can write about like this.

D. In ENG 1A you will be expected to write about *five* 4-page essays and read literary essays, argumentative essays, and expository prose, including at least one complete book.

- E. I do not feel ready for this amount of work.
1. I could do the work with a lot of support in class.
 2. I think that I can handle this amount of work mostly on my own.