

All people, no matter what age, want to be accepted in life. Sometimes, however, people think illogically and make bad decisions. To be accepted is to have a place in the <sup>sun</sup> among your peers and some people will do whatever it takes to get there. When my friend Jordan tried to get his place in the sun, he expected to get blisters but he didn't expect to lose his life.

Lost River is a recreation spot out in the middle of nowhere. My friend Jordan and I were on a day trip with a group of other boys. Jordan was really trying to fit in. I couldn't really understand what his motivation was or why fitting in with these boys was so important. I just wanted to have some fun with my friend but I might as well have been on the moon. We were sitting at the picnic table when Martin the oldest of the boys, spoke.

"How about we go to the top of the bridge?"

I laughed but Jordan jumped right up and said "Sure, let's go." I was quite astonished seeing as Jordan hates to swim and the only reason people went up there was to jump off into the water.

I was screaming at them saying this was a stupid idea but Jordan would do anything to be part of the crowd. As we approached the white gargantuan cantilever bridge I started to shiver. The bridge must have been over a hundred feet high. I was trembling as we walked out to the center of the bridge. It was illegal to do this so I was trying to get them to stop.

"Who's going first?" asked Martin. The other boys turned

and looked at Jordan. "Jordan, you go first."

"I don't know, it looks pretty high" was Jordan's response. I looked at him pleading and shaking my head trying to get him to turn back.

"GO! GO! GO! GO!" chanted the other boys.

"Jordan, let's just go back!" I screamed.

"Shut up!" Jordan gave in to their pressure and cautiously climbed over the rail. I tried to grab him to pull him down. I was just too weak. The other boys held me back.

"Here I go!" said Jordan.

Then he jumped.

We all gasped and ran over to the side to see. There was an infinite silence as we watched his body fall farther and farther. When we saw the splash the boys started cheering. I guess Jordan got what he wanted. My eyes were glued to the water. 10 seconds, 30 seconds, 5 minutes. We were frozen in fear and unable to see Jordan. Martin ran for help as I sank. I knew I wouldn't see him again.

It took an hour for the ambulance to get there and his body was not recovered for another four. They said his neck was broken on impact. Why did he do it? Why didn't I stop him?

To this day I ask myself these questions. Why was being accepted so important to him? I ask myself these questions every time I visit his grave. JORDAN THOMAS MARCH 15, 1987 - JULY 30 2002. Jordan wasn't the only one left with blisters after he tried to get his place in the sun. Jordan's parents, and friends, and I got blisters, too. If it takes all of this to have a place in the sun I will take rain any day.

## Grade 10: Narrative (Example of a “High” paper)

### Title: “The Jump”

Topic: “If you want a place in the sun, you will have to expect some blisters.” **Tell a true story** about a time when this quote was true for you or someone you know.

SCORES AND COMMENTARY (Phrases in **bold** are taken from the *Official Writing Scoring Guide*):

**Ideas and Content: 5** The writing is clear, focused and interesting, and it holds the reader’s attention. The writing is characterized by supporting, relevant, and carefully selected details about Jordan’s attempt “to get his place in the sun” by jumping off a bridge into the water below. The writing makes connections and shares insights when Jordan’s motivation to fit in results in his death, leaving “blisters” on his parents and friends.

**Organization: 5** The order and structure are strong and move the reader through the text. The writing is characterized by effective chronological sequencing and paragraph breaks. An inviting beginning draws the reader in with its insights about being accepted in life, and the resolution is satisfying as it ties in with the beginning. Details fit where placed, and effective transitions exist among all elements.

**Voice: 6** The writer has chosen a voice appropriate for the topic, purpose, and audience. The writer demonstrates deep commitment to the topic, and there is an exceptional sense of “writing to be read.” The writer seems to be aware of the reader and of how to communicate the message most effectively.

**Word Choice: 5** Words convey the intended message in an interesting, precise, and natural way appropriate to audience and purpose. The writing is characterized by vocabulary that is natural and not overdone and words that evoke clear images, e.g., “infinite silence,” “pleading and shaking my head,” and “white gargantuan cantilever bridge.”

**Sentence Fluency: 5** The writing has an easy flow and rhythm. The writing is characterized by a natural, fluent sound and sentence structure that enhances meaning (“Then he jumped.”). The dialogue sounds natural (“Here I go!”).

**Conventions: 5** The writing demonstrates strong control of standard writing conventions and uses them effectively to enhance communication. The writing is characterized by effective use of punctuation that guides the reader through the text, e.g. dialogue. Correct spelling, capitalization, grammar and usage all contribute to clarity and style. Conventions support readability.

## A Place in the Sun

"If you want a place in the sun, you will have to expect some blisters."

I am a varsity high jumper for my high school track team and I am proud. However, accomplishing this turned out to be much harder than I had anticipated. Not only was it difficult because of the physical demands of the sport, but also from the stress and pressure put on by those around me.

It is not just a rumor that seniors can be intimidating. Even the sophomores and juniors acted superior, glad to be over the freshman hurdle at last. What can make them really upset is when some silly "fresh" cuts into their time under the spotlight.

Positions for the varsity and junior varsity track teams are supposed to be chosen based entirely off of skill. The seniors, however, failed to see why they should work for three long years just to have an amateur freshman take their spot.

There are three varsity openings for each event, and I took one for high jump, forcing a senior down to the junior varsity level. Needless to say I was not by any means her favorite person. Consistently during our competitions I'd hear her whispering and subdued jeering from the sidelines. I knew what they were trying to do. She and her friends wanted me to mess up so someone more deserving would take my place.

Determined not to give in, I continued to try my best and in turn, continued to win. Eventually I earned a sort of wary respect from them, but I won't forget the way they acted.

What bothers me most is my curiosity. Would I have acted the same way? Would I have tried to ruin someone's chance at a place in the sun because of my own jealousy? I'd like to say I wouldn't, but I do not know for sure. If this situation is ever reversed, I will try my best not to

let my envy drive me to be so disheartening.

From this experience I have learned that the quote "If you want a place in the sun, you will have to expect some blisters," really is true. I had my chance to shine and it wasn't easy. I hope that I can teach others about what it feels like to get blisters, so everyone's place in the sun can be enjoyable.

## Grade 10: Narrative (Example of a “Medium High” paper)

### Title: “High Jumping”

Topic: “If you want a place in the sun, you will have to expect some blisters.” **Tell a true story** about a time when this quote was true for you or someone you know.

SCORES AND COMMENTARY (Phrases in **bold** are taken from the *Official Writing Scoring Guide*):

**Ideas and Content: 5** The writing is clear, focused and interesting. Main ideas stand out and are developed by supporting details suitable to audience and purpose. The writing is characterized by an exploration of the topic that **makes connections and shares insights** about a freshman versus senior track experience, especially about whether the freshman would act the same as the senior due to jealousy.

**Organization: 4** Organization is clear and coherent. Order and structure are present with clear sequencing and paragraph breaks. The writing is characterized by a recognizable, developed beginning that is **not particularly inviting**, and a developed conclusion that repeats the quote from the prompt which is almost too obvious. The **body is easy to follow**, and overall the organization **helps the reader despite some weaknesses**.

**Voice: 5** The writer demonstrates commitment to the topic, and there is a sense of “writing to be read.” The writer seems to be aware of the reader, and the reader can discern the writer behind the words.

**Word Choice: 5** Words convey the intended message in an interesting, precise, and natural way appropriate to audience and purpose. The writing is characterized by accurate, specific words that energize the writing, e.g., “subdued jeering,” “wary respect,” and “amateur freshman.”

**Sentence Fluency: 5** Sentences are carefully crafted with strong and varied structure that makes expressive oral reading easy and enjoyable. Variation in sentence structure, length, and beginnings add interest to the text (“Determined not to give in” and “What bothers me most is my curiosity.”). Effective dialogue could have contributed to a 6 in this trait.

**Conventions: 5** The writing demonstrates strong control of standard writing conventions. Correct use of punctuation, spelling, capitalization, and grammar and usage **support readability** and leave **little need for editing**. A wider range of conventions attempted could raise this score to a 6.



Running to be any member of the student council is a big job and takes ~~at~~ a lot of courage. The biggest task to take on would be president. There are so many things to keep track of and endless responsibilities. My friend Damon decided to run for tenth grade student body president, after talking about it all his life. Winning the election would definitely be his "place in the sun."

Some problems when running for student body president is the opposing competitors. You have to be strong when it comes to criticism and competition. Unfortunately, this was not one of Damon's expertise. Almost all was lost when it came to dirty politics. A girl named Sara said, two days before the big vote that, "Damon can't accomplish what he promised and he still wets the bed!" People still haven't let that down and being the sensitive guy that Damon is, he wanted to be taken out of the running.

Another hard aspect would be the student body. There are several hundred people watching your every move and judging everything you say. During this whole process some immature kids took a marker and wrote "Loser" all over Damon's posters. Another 'blister' along the way was during third period some kids, we believe that it was Sara, Maitlin, and her crew, went to his locker and taped up a sign saying, "You're going down." That wasn't too much of a disappointment for him because no one saw it. It just goes to show ~~that~~ that you can not be liked by everyone, but that didn't stop him.

The big day was here and we were both so pumped up. The president and vice-president from the previous year tabulated the votes. We knew it was going to be close. They were going to make there announcement during seventh period. Finally, with ten minutes left in seventh period the former president came over the entercom. I was holding my breath as they said, "There has been a tie." That was definatly a little bump in the road.

In the end, Damon won by 16 votes!! We were all so excited for him. I took him out for ice cream and a movie, my treat. So I guess you can accomplish anything if you want it bad enough. Becoming president was Damon's spot in the sun, despite all those blisters.



## Grade 10: Narrative (Example of a “Medium” paper)

### Title: “Student Council”

Topic: “If you want a place in the sun, you will have to expect some blisters.” **Tell a true story** about a time when this quote was true for you or someone you know.

SCORES AND COMMENTARY (Phrases in **bold** are taken from the *Official Writing Scoring Guide*):

**Ideas and Content: 4** The writing is clear and focused, and the reader can easily understand the main idea about running for tenth grade student body president. The writing is characterized by **supporting details that are relevant** but they are not particularly insightful.

**Organization: 4** Organization is clear and coherent. Order and structure are present but are somewhat formulaic. Clear sequencing and paragraph breaks help the reader. The beginning starts out with a general statement and introduces the friend who runs for tenth grade student body president, and the conclusion, like the introduction, refers to the quote from the prompt. The **body is easy to follow with details that fit where placed.**

**Voice: 5** The writer has chosen a voice appropriate for the topic, and there is a sense of “writing to be read.” The writer seems to be aware of the reader, and the reader can discern the writer behind the words. The writing is expressive and sincere as it retells how Damon ran for office and won by sixteen votes.

**Word Choice: 4** Words effectively convey the intended message. The writer employs a variety of words that are functional and appropriate to audience and purpose, e.g., “endless responsibilities,” “expertise,” and “dirty politics.”

**Sentence Fluency: 4** The writing flows. Sentence patterns are somewhat varied, contributing to ease in oral reading. The writing is characterized by some repeated patterns of sentence structure, length, and beginnings that detract somewhat from overall impact.

**Conventions: 4-** The writing demonstrates control of standard writing conventions. The writing is characterized by correct end-of-sentence punctuation; internal punctuation is sometimes incorrect. Spelling is usually correct but errors begin to distract the reader. Occasional lapses in correct grammar and usage are not severe enough to distort meaning or confuse the reader. Overall, the conventions errors do not impede readability.

"If you want a place in the sun, you will have to expect some blisters". This could mean so many things. It reminds me of a decision I had to make not to long ago. If I wanted a new truck, I had to sit out Homecoming.

I just started working for my parents in the landscaping company they own. Ever since then, ~~if~~ I have been stuck paying for everything myself. Except for the food that I eat. But anyways, all cloths, dances, parties, and travel I have to pay for. Painful as this is, its worth it.

About a month before Homecoming. My mom told ~~me~~ me something that really sucked. If I wanted my truck, then I was going to have to pay for it. And of course I wanted it, Its a Diesel Ford F250 longbed.

So I started cutting down on all of the little things a normally do. like going to the Mall ~~and~~ going out to eat. I was worried that someone else might buy the truck if I didnt hurry up. Thats when I decided to stay home from Homecoming. I wouldnt be able to afford it.

This was a very hard decision for me to make. But its only a few blisters.

Theyv all already healed. And I couldnt be happier because of my new truck

## Grade 10: Narrative (Example of a “Medium Low” paper)

### Title: “A New Truck”

Topic: “If you want a place in the sun, you will have to expect some blisters.” **Tell a true story** about a time when this quote was true for you or someone you know.

SCORES AND COMMENTARY (Phrases in **bold** are taken from the *Official Writing Scoring Guide*):

**Ideas and Content: 4-** The writing is clear and focused, and the reader can easily understand the main idea. Support is present although it is limited. The writer tells just enough about missing Homecoming to save money to buy a truck to score a low 4. Explaining the reasons for having to pay for everything but food would have provided a more interesting and balanced paper.

**Organization: 4-** Organization is clear and coherent, and order and structure are present. The sequencing is clear and paragraph breaks are correct. The beginning and ending are recognizable but not particularly inviting. Overall, the organization is almost skeletal which accounts for the low 4 score.

**Voice: 4** The writer seems committed to the topic, and there is a sense of “writing to be read.” In places, the writing is expressive and sincere (“Painful as this is, its worth it” and “I couldn’t be happier because of my new truck.”).

**Word Choice: 3** Language lacks precision and variety. The writer does not employ a variety of words, producing a sort of “generic” paper filled with familiar words and phrases. Slang is not effective (“sucked”). Words are accurate and work but rarely capture the reader’s interest.

**Sentence Fluency: 3** The writing tends to be mechanical rather than fluid. The writing is characterized by some variety in sentence structure but little variety in length. Sentences are functional but lack energy.

**Conventions: 3** The writing demonstrates limited control of standard writing conventions. End-of-sentence punctuation is usually correct, but internal punctuation contains frequent errors. Spelling errors distract the reader, and misspellings of common words occur, e.g., “somone,” “they’v,” and “anyways.” Most of the contractions are missing apostrophes. A significant need for editing exists.

# A Job Makes You PAY

A Job makes you PAY.

When I Say that I mean. When you go out in the world don't expect to walk write threw it.

It will cause you Physical or Mental Blisters. You are going to half to work and get blisters to move up in life.

Although my School years I was a goof off.

Since I started high school, this is my second year. I had to work a little bit harder on my grammar and spelling. All the things I was supposed to learn about in elementary and middle school.

I Am doing All right and all my grades are passing. I am learning so much more. Since I half been paying attention. I plan on moving up from here. You got to start somewhere.

After high school I Am going to place myself right out there under the sun and join the MARINES. After I get my college credits and get my four years in law enforcement. Some day be a Police officer I Always wanted to be and Always will be.

I + is going to take A lot of sunlight and a lot of blisters but I hope to live my dream as a Police officer.

## Grade 10: Narrative (Example of a “Low” paper)

### Title: “A Job Makes You Pay”

Topic: “If you want a place in the sun, you will have to expect some blisters.” **Tell a true story** about a time when this quote was true for you or someone you know.

SCORES AND COMMENTARY (Phrases in **bold** are taken from the *Official Writing Scoring Guide*):

**Ideas and Content: 3-** The reader can understand the main ideas, but they are **simplistic** and the **result is not effective**. Supporting detail is **often limited and overly general**. The writing is characterized by **difficulties moving from general observations** about going to school to get a job **to specifics** about how to reach that goal.

**Organization: 3-** An attempt has been made to organize the writing; however, the **overall structure is skeletal**. The writing is sequenced chronologically and **paragraph breaks are attempted**. The **beginning is undeveloped** and the conclusion doesn’t really complement the beginning. Transitions are used to help the reader through the piece.

**Voice: 4** A voice is present. The writer seems committed to the topic, and in places, the writing is **sincere**. The reader can glimpse the writer behind the words.

**Word Choice: 3** Language lacks precision and variety, producing a sort of **“generic” paper filled with familiar words and phrases**. The words work and are accurate but not purposeful.

**Sentence Fluency: 3** The writing tends to be **mechanical rather than fluid**. **Occasional awkward constructions force the reader to slow down or reread** (“Since I started high school, this is my second year.”). The writing is characterized by good control over simple sentence structures but **little control over more complex sentences**.

**Conventions: 2** The writing demonstrates little control of standard writing conventions. The writing is characterized by **many end-of-sentence punctuation errors, frequent internal punctuation errors, spelling errors that frequently distract the reader**, incorrect capitalization, and errors in grammar and usage (“You got to start somewhere.”). **Frequent, significant errors impede readability**.