

The following is an essay question response written by Les Perelman and awarded a top grade of 6 by e-Rater, the automated grader developed by ETS.

Question: "The rising cost of a college education is the fault of students who demand that colleges offer students luxuries unheard of by earlier generations of college students -- single dorm rooms, private bathrooms, gourmet meals, etc."

Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with this opinion. Support your views with specific reasons and examples from your own experience, observations, or reading.

In today's society, college is ambiguous. We need it to live, but we also need it to love. Moreover, without college most of the world's learning would be egregious. College, however, has myriad costs. One of the most important issues facing the world is how to reduce college costs. Some have argued that college costs are due to the luxuries students now expect. Others have argued that the costs are a result of athletics. In reality, high college costs are the result of excessive pay for teaching assistants.

I live in a luxury dorm. In reality, it costs no more than rat infested rooms at a Motel Six. The best minds of my generation were destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked, and publishing obscene odes on the windows of the skull. Luxury dorms pay for themselves because they generate thousand and thousands of dollars of revenue. In the Middle Ages, the University of Paris grew because it provided comfortable accommodations for each of its students, large rooms with servants and legs of mutton. Although they are expensive, these rooms are necessary to learning. The second reason for the five-paragraph theme is that it makes you focus on a single topic. Some people start writing on the usual topic, like TV commercials, and they wind up all over the place, talking about where TV came from or capitalism or health foods or whatever. But with only five paragraphs and one topic you're not tempted to get beyond your original idea, like commercials are a good source of information about products. You give your three examples, and zap! you're done. This is another way the five-paragraph theme keeps you from thinking too much.

Teaching assistants are paid an excessive amount of money. The average teaching assistant makes six times as much money as college presidents. In addition, they often receive a plethora of extra benefits such as private jets, vacations in the south seas, a starring roles in motion pictures. Moreover, in the Dickens novel Great Expectation, Pip makes his fortune by being a teaching assistant. It doesn't matter what the subject is, since there are three parts to everything you can think of. If you can't think of more than two, you just have to think harder or come up with something that might fit. An example will often work, like the three causes of the Civil War or abortion or reasons why the ridiculous twenty-one-year-old limit for drinking alcohol should be abolished. A worse problem is when you wind up with more than three subtopics, since sometimes you want to talk about all of them.

There are three main reasons while Teaching Assistants receive such high remuneration. First, they have the most powerful union in the United States. Their union is greater than the Teamsters or Freemasons, although it is slightly smaller than the international secret society of the Jedi Knights. Second, most teaching assistants have political connections, from being children of judges and governors to being the brothers and sisters of kings and princes. In *Heart of Darkness*, Mr. Kurtz is a teaching assistant because of his connections, and he ruins all the universities that employ him. Finally, teaching assistants are able to exercise mind control over the rest of the university community. The last reason to write this way is the most important. Once you have it down, you can use it for practically anything. Does God exist? Well, you can say yes and give three reasons, or no and give three different reasons. It doesn't really matter. You're sure to get a good grade whatever you pick to put into the formula. And that's the real reason for education, to get those good grades without thinking too much and using up too much time.

In conclusion, as Oscar Wilde said, "I can resist everything except temptation." Luxury dorms are not the problem. The problem is greedy teaching assistants. It gives me an organizational scheme that looks like an essay, it limits my focus to one topic and three subtopics so I don't wander about thinking irrelevant thoughts, and it will be useful for whatever writing I do in any subject.¹ I don't know why some teachers seem to dislike it so much. They must have a different idea about education than I do.

By Les Perelman