

Task Prompt: What community, state, national or international problems would you like to raise newspaper readers' awareness of? Write a newspaper op-ed piece or magazine op-ed piece in which you persuade readers to see an issue from your perspective. Define the broader issue and explain how it manifests concretely in society. Identify facts, details, and implications to persuade your reader to agree with your point of view and use both logical and emotional appeals. To strengthen your argument, provide a counter argument in which you present the other side of the problem and then refute it. End with a call to action, explaining to readers what they can do about this problem if they have been persuaded by your argument.

Legalization of Marijuana

Researchers have found that use of controlled substances (including marijuana) has played an increasingly prevalent role in fatal automotive crashes. Drugged driving accounted for more than 28 percent of traffic deaths in 2010, up from more than 16 percent in 1999 (Thompson). A large portion of those deaths have involved multi-vehicle crashes, in which marijuana use was by only one of the vehicle drivers. In other words, fatal car crashes as a result of marijuana usage has been on the rise and continues to grow. As a result, the movement to legalize marijuana continues to face a looming obstacle, namely, that its use can be dangerous, both to users themselves, and others who come into the path of the users. The usage of illegal marijuana is very high, and many users act responsibly and do not hurt themselves. However, everyone needs to come to realization that marijuana shouldn't be legalized, for to do so, it will continue to increase the threat to the health and safety of others.

Over the years there have been previous debates on legalizing marijuana in certain states. Marijuana usage has been legalized in some states. For example, "[m]arijuana legalization won on the ballot in Colorado and Washington in the 2012 election, and in Alaska, Oregon and Washington, D.C., in the 2014 election" ("Marijuana Legalization and Regulation"). Coincidentally, I happened to be in the state of Washington right around the time when that state legalized marijuana. This was my first time ever encountering marijuana. The streets smelled like it and people were smoking marijuana right in front of me. There were stores that sold only paraphernalia, such as bong devices and lighters. This was very scary for me and gave me a lasting impression. Though I was only 13 at the time, I sensed that the behavior of the users I saw in the street did not seem mature or under control. What I witnessed was that innocent people could get hurt by decisions of marijuana users who did not have control over their actions.

Even though I did not like what I saw, it got me curious to learn more. So I started to read about it and talk with older kids and adults about it. The more I looked into it, the more I saw that marijuana has potential for additional dangers. Though legalization has occurred in 5 states, I have been surprised by the absence of protections in the law for non-smoking people in the presence of smokers. I learned about "contact highs", which can occur from inhaling smoke of others. I also learned how some people are able to use chemistry tricks to extract stuff from marijuana plants that can be put into foods, called "edibles". A lot of people have the possibility of eating edibles without knowing about it. For example, people often bring edibles to parties, where they get eaten by hungry party-goers, without them knowing about it.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:15 AM

Comment [1]: Writer does not double-space this text, so that visually the writing looks like an Op-ed.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:37 AM

Comment [2]: The writer sets the scene for the argument using statistics (lede technique) that can connect to the reader.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:17 AM

Comment [3]: Writer addresses the opposing view. Doing this early in the writing helps the reader who doesn't agree with the writer's side "listen" to the argument he presents.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:18 AM

Comment [4]: Writer's claim statement. It presents the claim to be argued and a summary of evidence that will be presented in relation to the claim.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:21 AM

Comment [5]: Topic sentence helps the reader see that this argument is a relevant issue in today's world.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:20 AM

Comment [6]: Writer includes a personal story (anecdotal evidence) to make the reader see that this topic is relevant to his world.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:22 AM

Comment [7]: The writer transitions from the previous paragraph's ideas into this new paragraph. It also helps to show how readers why this is an important topic to this writer.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:23 AM

Comment [8]: Topic sentence begins to state the writer's argument.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:23 AM

Comment [9]: Relevant vocabulary is explained for the reader.

Marijuana leads to many negative effects. For example my grandma had lung cancer and so did my great grandmother. One got it from smoking. The other thinks she got it from second hand smoke. Finding out that my grandma had lung cancer really frightened me. During her time as a younger adult, lots of people would smoke marijuana and cigarettes so it explains how she got lung cancer. I had been scared about the fact that my grandma had cancer. Luckily she survived. "The immediate effects of taking marijuana include rapid heartbeat, disorientation, lack of physical coordination, often followed by depression or sleepiness. Some users suffer panic attacks or anxiety. Marijuana smoke contains 50% to 70% more cancer-causing substances than tobacco smoke"(Alamy).

Amy 6/14/2015 9:25 AM

Comment [10]: Topic sentence continues the writer's argument.

Amy 7/11/2015 6:57 PM

Comment [11]: Personal evidence based on assumption. Using a personal story helps bring the writer into the opinion, but the story could be improved if the second grandmother's example was fact-based.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:27 AM

Comment [12]: The writer provides direct quote (factual evidence) to show that his earlier personal evidence is credible.

Amy 7/11/2015 6:58 PM

Comment [13]: This topic sentence serves to broaden the argument to a wider group of people which is one of the goals of this writing unit.

Marijuana addictions also place a heavy burden on society. Having possession of marijuana can lead to a damaged future, because of possible arrest and jail time. "There were 658,000 arrests for marijuana possession in 2012, according to F.B.I. figures, compared with 256,000 for cocaine, heroin and their derivatives"("The New York Times Call for Marijuana Legalization"). Addiction also puts burdens on rehabilitation resources, such as clinics for therapy to break the addiction.

Right now we can affect the future with youth and drugs, "...it makes sense for us to look at how we can make sure that our kids are discouraged from using drugs and engaging in substance abuse generally. There is more work we can do on the public health side and the treatment side" (Obama).

Amy 6/14/2015 9:30 AM

Comment [14]: While the evidence is relevant to the argument, this source is not included in the Works Cited page and should be since it is included in the text.

Amy 6/14/2015 10:59 AM

Comment [15]: This paragraph discusses the evidence from the previous paragraph. The writer is experimenting with the Op-Ed structure which separates evidence and commentary.

The youth should be somehow discouraged to not get involved with drugs such as marijuana. Kids should be discouraged from drugs. If this happens we can hopefully keep it away from becoming this country's future. If we can stop kids now from doing drugs in their future it will eliminate another negative health concern. Discouraging the youth to not do drugs will hopefully eliminate health concerns and the legalization of marijuana.

Amy 7/11/2015 6:58 PM

Comment [16]: Counterargument is presented.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:32 AM

Comment [17]: Evidence to support opposing view.

We don't need to legalize marijuana. Many people believe that marijuana should be legalized for health reasons. This is true that some people need marijuana for health reasons but that doesn't mean marijuana needs to become legalized. The people that need it for health reasons would have to get a medical marijuana permit. And most states throughout the U.S have already legalized medical marijuana. So for having medical marijuana legalized, marijuana should stay illegal.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:32 AM

Comment [18]: The writer refutes the opposing view and brings the reader back to his main argument.

Hopefully over time the effects and facts of marijuana are passed on to the next generation of kids. Actions shall be done to discourage the use and legalization of marijuana. Try and prevent this from expanding to the future. Eliminate this potential life changing drug from being easily accessible.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:34 AM

Comment [19]: Call to Action – the writer asks that people educate themselves on this issue.

Works Cited

Alamy. "Does Marijuana Kill Brain Cells? Harmful Effects on the Brain - Drug-Free World." *Does Marijuana Kill Brain Cells? Harmful Effects on the Brain - Drug-Free World*. N.p., n.d. Web. 01 June 2015.

Kerlikowske, Gil. "Addressing the Legalization of Marijuana." *Addressing the Legalization of Marijuana*. N.p., n.d. Web. 01 June 2015.

"Marijuana Legalization and Regulation." *Marijuana Legalization and Regulation*. N.p., n.d. Web. 01 June 2015.

"The New York Times Calls for Marijuana Legalization." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 26 July 2014. Web. 01 June 2015.

Thompson, Dennis. "Fatal Car Crashes Involving Pot Use Have Tripled in U.S., Study Finds." *Consumer HealthDay*. N.p., n.d. Web. 01 June 2015.

Amy 7/11/2015 7:00 PM

Comment [20]: Students were encouraged to use newspapers as their sources, as well as to use their skills of finding credible websites from Informative Essays. They used Easy Bib to construct Works Cited entries.

The majority of these citations are incomplete which questions the credibility of the sources. It is clear that the student made attempts to use newspapers as sources.

***n.p. and n.d. means that Easy Bib could not find a publisher or publishing date for the source.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:36 AM

Comment [21]: Second and subsequent lines should be indented for proper MLA formatting.

Op-Ed Rubric

Element	Advanced	On-Target	Novice
Content	<p>The writer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Begins with a compelling and unique lede. · Provides a debatable claim that makes clear the focus of the op-ed. · Makes a strong, multi-point argument: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Analyzes each point thoroughly and discusses the connections between and across points. ○ Provides strong evidence to support each point. ○ Sources are credible and evidence is presented persuasively. · Includes multiple counterarguments. · Effectively refutes the counterarguments. · Employs a variety of evidence types: factual, anecdotal, statistical, authorities in the field. · Provides a conclusion that is a call to action for the reader and makes clear what will happen if this issues goes unaddressed. 	<p>The writer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Begins with a lede. · Provides a debatable claim that makes clear the focus of the op-ed. · Makes a strong, multi-point argument: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Analyzes each point thoroughly. ○ Provides strong evidence to support each point by pulling from credible sources and presenting it persuasively. · Includes a counterargument. · Effectively refutes the counterargument. · Provides a conclusion that is a call to action for the reader. 	<p>The writer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Skips the lede. · Makes an initial claim that is not debatable. · Provides an argument that contains only one or two points. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Does some analysis of points but could delve deeper. ○ Provides little or inadequate evidence to support point. ○ Does not make the connection between key points and evidence clear. · Has not used credible sources. · Did not include a counterargument; or included a counterargument but does not refute it. · Concludes the op-ed without providing an action plan for the reader.
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The chosen structure consistently reveals the writer's line of reasoning in the presentation of the issue. · Transitions also make clear the line of reasoning and create a logical flow between sentences and paragraphs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The chosen structure usually reveals the line of reasoning for the writer's stance on the chosen issue. · Transitions also make clear the line of reasoning and create a logical flow between sentences and paragraphs. · There are only occasionally misplaced paragraphs or sentences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The chosen structure does not make clear the line of reasoning for the writer's stance on the chosen issue. · The arrangement of paragraphs and sentences lacks logic.
Style & Mechanics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Voice is persuasive, authoritative, and consistently appropriate for the intended audience. · The word choice is interesting, reflects the intended audience, and is specific to the chosen topic. · Sentence structures are varied and complex. · The essay contains no errors in punctuation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Voice is appropriately persuasive and a good tonal choice for the intended audience. · The word choice usually reflects the intended audience and is specific to the chosen topic. · Sentence structure is varied. · Sentences are properly punctuated in most cases. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Voice is not appropriate for the intended audience; or shifts in tone throughout the op-ed. · The word choice is simplistic and/or general and is not specific to the topic or intended audience. · Op-ed employs subject/verb sentence structure with little variety. · Contains numerous punctuation errors that affect meaning and fluidity.

This is an advanced 8th grade Argument Essay. Students feel much freer in this writing style coming off of the very strict informative essay, and this writer shows that clearly in the op-ed structure that he utilizes. While this student chose a relevant topic in the news, he added depth to his argument with his personal anecdote. He has experience with this topic which allowed him to write about it in a believable way that helps to draw the reader in. It creates a good atmosphere with his audience and makes this an advanced essay.

This paper is an advanced paper for writer's voice, organization, and sources which support a multi-point argument. The writer's conclusion could have asked the reader to do something about the topic.