

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.

### Concussions Turning Into Further Disease

Junior Seau was a professional linebacker in the National Football League (NFL) who played for the San Diego Chargers and seemed to have it all. That is until he began to withdraw from his family and friends. Seau made numerous terrible business decisions. He abused pills, drank and gambled away terrifying sums. It was evident to those who knew him well that he was struggling, but no one foresaw his suicide on the morning of May 2, 2012.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:39 AM

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

Even though concussions and big hits are part of the game, I believe there are ways to prevent further disease and even death. From medical trainers to more protective helmets there can be countless ways the NFL can make the game safer, they just have to do it.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:40 AM

**Comment [2]:** Writer introduces his argument with a dramatic story that was in the news.

"There have been many NFL players who have committed suicide or died from a head disease. – including Terry Long of the Pittsburgh Steelers, Andre Waters of the Philadelphia Eagles, Dave Duerson of the Chicago Bears and Chris Henry of the Cincinnati Bengals"(Crees). Any time someone takes their own life away it's tragic. These players above all died from disease that a concussion gave them. It does not matter if it is a minor concussion or a big hit during the game either one can turn as bad. But it can be controlled or even stopped.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:40 AM

**Comment [3]:** Writer's debatable claim. The first sentence clearly introduces his argument. The second sentence provides the summary of evidence that will be used to prove his argument.

When a player gets tackled, you hope he is he going to be okay. But once you see that player back in the game you just ask yourself, how? How is he back in the game? The trainer that sent the player back onto the field should be held accountable along with the player himself. Both know that brain disease can happen after concussions. If the player is honest and tells the coach I'm not feeling well or needs rest, this problem could be avoided.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:43 AM

**Comment [4]:** Topic supported by previous evidence.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:43 AM

**Comment [5]:** Writer brings the reader back to his main argument.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:47 AM

**Comment [6]:** Writer uses questions to relate to the reader.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:47 AM

**Comment [7]:** Writer makes a clear statement about his opinion on the subject.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:48 AM

**Comment [8]:** If the reader knew who Sean Gagnier was this would stronger introduction of evidence.

According to Sean Gagnier each year, researchers at Virginia Tech University and Wake Forest University work together to test the newest helmets. They test the helmet's ability to sustain impact and reduce concussions. In 2011, there was only one helmet that received a five-star rating from the Virginia Tech study, it was the Riddell Revo Speed helmet. The 2012 tests saw two more helmets added to the five-star rating, the new Riddell 360 and Rawlings Quantum Plus (Gagnier). This is a very good way to make the NFL much safer. If all of the NFL helmets used were five-star rated, I think there would be less concussions and provide more protection for the players. The problem is NFL players get to choose the style of helmets and the facemask designs they wear. The player and/or the team may have contracts with different helmet manufactures which may force the player to wear an inferior piece of equipment.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:49 AM

**Comment [9]:** The writer gives clear reasoning how the previous evidence supports his argument.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:49 AM

**Comment [10]:** Writer includes a small opposing argument.

For players that are old and out of the limelight, Dr. Kevin Crutchfield has some ideas. "Retired players need to have periodic psychological assessment because they do get depressed." I agree with Dr. Kevin Crutchfield 100%. When a player retires from the NFL, their life can suddenly become empty. Football is everything to them and yes, they might have money but money can't fix everyone's problems. From all the blows to the head and injuries they might have suffered disease may not be too far behind. A way that this could all be cured is consistent check-ins with a psychologist. If you have a heart problem or a broken bone you usually have follow up appointments after the initial one. For example, a NFL player receives a big hit to the head. He sees the doctor and the doctor clears the player to play. That player usually never goes back to see the doctor and he continues to play the game. If more players went for follow up appointments, they would be less vulnerable to a disease such as CTE.

CTE is a progressive degenerative disease that is caused by repeated head injuries. People with CTE may have symptoms such as dementia, headaches, tremors, confusion, aggression and depression. These diseases can happen just from one big hit to the head during a game. At the time you don't realize but as you age, you can start to feel these symptoms more and more. When you're young and you take a hit to the head, you usually shake it off and continue to play. But these hits can come back and impact you in your later years.

CTE impacts mental and emotional health by disrupting the balance of neurochemicals in the brain. When a person suffers a concussion, Crutchfield explained, "It incites a release of glutamine, which in turn disrupts the brain's potassium and sodium channels. In addition, an influx of calcium to the nerve cells shut down the mitochondria, which supply energy to the brain. This causes the brain to go into 'energy failure.' You require energy for the brain to balance back out and for the neurotransmitters to stay in balance. And so that's what leads to depression, because depression is a neurochemical imbalance. It's common in brain injuries to suffer injury-related depression because of the unbalance of chemicals. When the injuries are suffered repeatedly over time, it becomes more and more difficult for the brain to recover from the imbalance, and the condition can potentially become permanent or even worsen over time." According to Crutchfield, these symptoms don't just impact you they impact everyone around them, and yes there is no cure. But, just think if a trainer held you out of the game or checked for a concussion during the game, it might prevent these problems later.

Among the NFL legends found to have had CTE are Duerson, Hall of Famer Pittsburgh Steelers center Mike Webster and former San Diego Chargers legend Junior Seau. ESPN's Outside the Lines reported that a New York neuropathologist had discovered signs of CTE in the brain of Jovan Belcher. In 2012, the former Kansas City Chiefs linebacker shot and killed his girlfriend before driving to a Chiefs practice facility, where he committed suicide in front of team officials (Breslow). This is just another example of a tragic death that happened from common blows to the head during a routine game.

Researchers have now examined the brain tissue of 128 football players who, before their deaths, played the game professionally, semi-professionally, in college or in high school. Of that sample, 101 players, or just under 80 percent, tested positive for CTE (Breslow). This number amazes me because so many players that died already had CTE. Football is one of America's favorite sports but fans do not realize the amount of danger there actually is. When I watch, I see the trainers on

Amy 6/14/2015 9:50 AM

**Comment [11]:** Writer acknowledges that this evidence may have previous causes.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:51 AM

**Comment [12]:** Writer tries to connect to audience on a more relatable issue rather than a concussion which many people haven't had an experience with.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:52 AM

**Comment [13]:** Writer gives a clear statement about how the evidence supports his argument.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:52 AM

**Comment [14]:** Relevant vocabulary explained. The placement of this paragraph should have been earlier, so the reader can understand this long-term disease that the writer mentions often.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:53 AM

**Comment [15]:** Statement serves to tell people why this is such an enormous and often ignored problem.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:56 AM

**Comment [16]:** Explaining the background of this expert would enhance the evidence. It is also important to talk about the evidence in the present tense.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:57 AM

**Comment [17]:** Writer gives a concise summary of the evidence and brings the reader back to his main argument.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:58 AM

**Comment [18]:** Source not on Works Cited page.

the sidelines and on the other side are the players. The trainers should have more interaction with the players to make sure everything is going just fine.

Concussions can turn deadly no matter how you look at it. But some said the NFL has already done enough to prevent concussions. In 2013, the NFL updated their protocol with players and concussions. One major change in the protocol is that a certified athletic trainer watches the game to look at the hits players take. I think this is helpful but what would be more helpful is if the athletic trainer was on the field. This would improve communication. Another point is if a player received a concussion the doctor would check for symptoms everyday until his symptoms were gone. This might stop concussions from worsening however a player can still get disease. Doctors should still be checking the players even after the symptoms have cleared. The NFL has tried to address the concussion issue but it is time for a complete update and overhaul of the current concussion protocol.

Eight months after Seau death, the scientists who examined his brain announced they had found evidence of CTE, the dire neurological disease linked to concussions, which has been a factor in the deaths of many other NFL players. It's impossible to pinpoint the degree to which CTE drove Seau's rapid decline. As stated above, the disease has been connected to depression, insomnia, emotional withdrawal, and compulsive behavior—all of which afflicted him. But there is one item everybody close to Seau agrees on: In his final years, Junior was no longer the Junior they had known and loved. This is an ongoing problem and the players, team owners and most importantly the fans need to be the voices and demand the NFL end this problem.

#### Works Cited

- Bradley, Bill. "NFL's 2013 Protocol for Players with Concussions." NFL.com. NFL, 1 Oct. 2013. Web. 01 June 2015.
- Crees, Alex. "Junior Seau's Death Again Highlights Risks of Repeated Concussions, Head Injuries." Fox News. FOX News Network, 03 May 2012. Web. 01 June
- Gagnier, Sean. "OTF- What Are Helmets Doing to Reduce the Risk of Concussions?" OTF- What Are Helmets Doing to Reduce the Risk of Concussions? OTF Report, 2012. Web. 01 June 2015.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:59 AM

**Comment [19]:** Writer brings his personal experience with the game to the reader.

Amy 6/14/2015 9:59 AM

**Comment [20]:** The writer brings the reader back to his main argument.

Amy 7/11/2015 7:03 PM

**Comment [21]:** Counterargument is presented.

Amy 6/14/2015 10:00 AM

**Comment [22]:** Evidence for the opposing view.

Amy 6/14/2015 10:01 AM

**Comment [23]:** Writer acknowledges the opposing side and adds on to bring the reader back to his main argument.

Amy 6/14/2015 10:01 AM

**Comment [24]:** The writer brings the reader back to his main argument.

Amy 6/14/2015 10:02 AM

**Comment [25]:** The writer continues the story from the introductory paragraph.

Amy 6/14/2015 10:02 AM

**Comment [26]:** Writer includes a summary of evidence presented in the essay.

Amy 6/14/2015 10:03 AM

**Comment [27]:** Call to action. Writer asks the fans to speak to the NFL or this will be a continuing problem.

Amy 7/11/2015 7:04 PM

**Comment [28]:** Writer used Easy Bib to generate citations.

## Op-Ed Rubric

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

This is an advanced 8<sup>th</sup> grade Argument Essay. This writer chose a topic that is personally important to him as he is an avid sports fan which is clear in the voice of his essay. However, he also chose a topic that is currently relevant in the news which makes it relate to a wider audience. This writer gives a clear statement to the reader about what should be done about this issue. Many writers struggle to make a defining call to action which relates to the overall argument, but this writer is able to make this happen.

This is an advanced paper for use of sources, writer's voice, and content. As mentioned in Comment 14, the writer's organization could have been improved for reader's clarity.

