

Week Twenty-Six: RLA Prompt and Success

Weekly Focus: Response
Weekly Skill: Understanding the Prompt and Planning a Response

Lesson Summary: Today students will be introduced to the new essential question, “What does success look like?” In this lesson, students will be introduced to the RLA writing prompt. Furthermore, students will practice identifying the best-supported argument and practice completing a pre-writing exercise.

Materials Needed: RLA Prompt, Interpreting Graphic Information, Pro-Con Reading, Pre-Writing Exercise, Whiteboard and markers

Objectives: Students will be able to...

- Understand the RLA writing prompt
- Analyze two sides of an argument and identify the best-supported argument
- Complete a pre-writing graphic organizer
- Write a rough draft of an extended response

Common Core Standards Addressed: W.11-12.2., W.11-12.4, W.11-12.5., W.11-12.10.

Notes:

The Pro-Con reading has an uneven number of statements for each side. However, be sure to communicate to students that this fact alone should not dictate their analysis of which argument is better supported. The quality of the statements should be the focus of the analysis.

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Activities:

Topic Introduction: What does it mean to be successful?	Time: 15 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce new Essential Question and the RLA Prompt <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Write the new essential question on the board for students to see. Tell them that this is the question that we will be discussing for the next unit. Have a student look up the definition of "success" in the dictionary and read it to the class. 2) Explain to students that today we will be discussing "success" in relation to college education. We are certainly <u>not</u> implying that to be successful you must have a college degree. However, this is one way that our society measures success, and is, therefore, a good topic for discussion in this unit. 3) Students will first complete a pre-reading exercise that asks them to interpret graphic information. Then, students will analyze a pro-con reading about the necessity of a college education. Lastly, students will complete a pre-writing exercise that will give them a chance to practice planning a response for the RLA prompt. • RLA WORDING OF PROMPT <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Hand out the RLA prompt to students. Read through it and ask students to tell you, in their own words, what they need to do on the RLA extended-response item. 2) Point out that even though the reading selection(s) will be different for each version of the test, the wording and task outlined in the prompt will remain the same. 	

Extended Response	Time: 120 minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-Reading Exercise (25 minutes) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Hand out the "Interpreting Graphic Information" worksheet to students. 2) Go over the directions; then, have students work in pairs to answer the questions for both graphics. 3) Go over the answers as a class. • Pro-Con Reading (35 minutes) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Tell students that you are going to read different viewpoints on the question, "Is a College Education Worth It?" While the RLA test readings will not have differing viewpoints <u>clearly</u> labeled "pro" and "con" (students will have to pick out the different viewpoints through reading comprehension), this exercise is extremely helpful in understanding what the prompt is asking and in practicing how to respond. 2) Hand out the Pro-Con Reading. Ask students to volunteer to read the different statements on each side. Read the entire "pro" column first. Then, read the entire "con" column. As you go, make sure to stop and clarify any vocabulary words or meanings of statements/statistics. The first sentence has been bolded to aid in comprehending the overall message of each statement. • Pre-Writing Exercise (60 minutes) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Hand out the "Pre-Writing Exercise" graphic organizer. 2) Complete the first page together as a class. 	

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3) The second page asks students to choose the better-supported argument. Students may have different answers. This portion of the pre-writing exercise should be completed individually. As students are writing their response to the last question, walk around the room to make sure students are on the right track with their explanations. **NOTE:** This section is not meant to be the final draft of the extended response. The answer to this last question is meant to help students begin to articulate why they chose SIDE A or SIDE B, writing down initial thoughts of their line of reasoning.

- **Wrap-Up**

Have a few volunteers share which argument they decided was better supported and one or two reasons why (FROM THE TEXT!)

If Time Permits/Extra Work/Homework:

Time: 45 minutes

Have students write an extended response after completing the pre-writing exercise. Because this will be the first time many, if not all, students have written an extended response, still give them 45 minutes to complete the writing portion of the assignment.

Online Resources:

- 1) [Purdue OWL: Understanding the Prompt](#)
- 2) [Purdue OWL: Writing a Thesis Statement](#)

RLA PROMPT

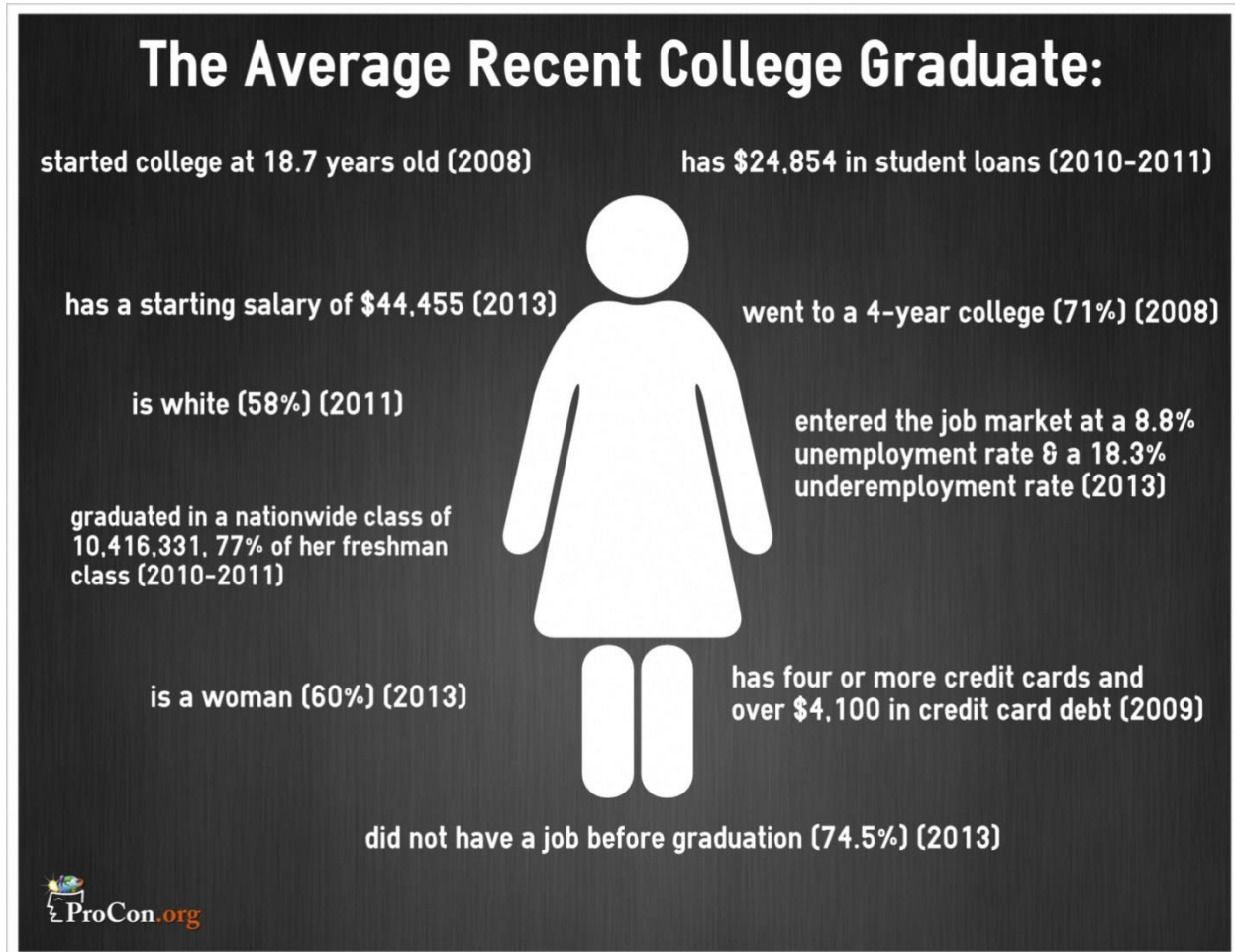
In your response, analyze both positions presented to determine which one is best supported. Use relevant and specific evidence from the article to support your response.

Notes:

On the RLA test, you will have 45 minutes to complete the reading, analysis, and writing for the extended response item. While you should be sure to edit and revise your essay for grammatical errors and errors in logic, the extended response scoring system will score these essays as on-demand written responses. In other words, it recognizes that this is first-draft writing.

Also, there is NO right or wrong answer. Potentially, a case can be made for EITHER side of the argument. However, you must be able to construct a response that provides relevant and specific evidence FROM THE TEXT to support your argument.

INTERPRETING GRAPHIC INFORMATION

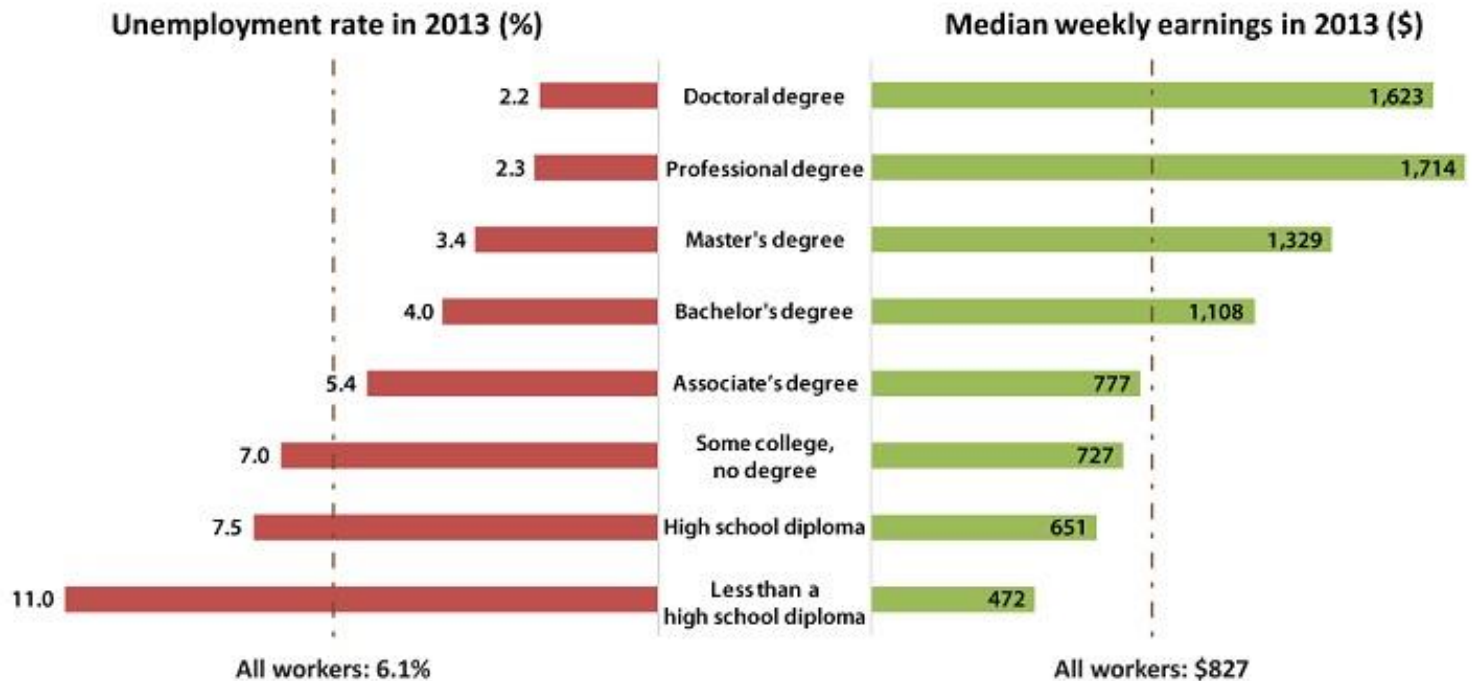


<http://college-education.procon.org/#background>

1. According to the graphic above, what information supports the position that the average recent college graduate is successful?
2. According to the graphic above, what information supports the position that the average recent college graduate still encounters struggles?

INTERPRETING GRAPHIC INFORMATION (continued)

Earnings and unemployment rates by educational attainment



Note: Data are for persons age 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers.
Source: Current Population Survey, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor

1. According to the graphic, what is the relationship between the unemployment rate in 2013 and the median weekly earnings in 2013 by educational attainment? Write in complete sentences.

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"Is a College Education Worth It?"

Text taken from: <http://college-education.procon.org/#background>

The debate over whether a college education is worth it may have begun when the colonists arrived from Europe and founded "New College" (later renamed Harvard University) in 1636. With 19.9 million US college students in 2013 and average student debt at over \$26,500, the debate continues today...

PROs	CONS
<p>1. College graduates make more money. On average, a college graduate with a bachelor's degree earned \$30,000 more per year than a high school graduate, or about \$500,000 more over a lifetime, as of Apr. 2013. [8] Earning an associate's degree (a 2-year degree) was worth about \$170,000 more than a high school diploma over a lifetime in 2011. [9] The median income for families headed by a bachelor's degree holder was \$100,096 in 2011—more than double than that for a family headed by a high school graduate. [10] The median increase in earnings for completing the freshman year of college was 11% and the senior year was 16% in 2007. [11] 85% of Forbes' 2012 America's 400 Richest People list were college grads. [12]</p> <p>2. More and more jobs require college degrees. During the recession between Dec. 2007 and Jan. 2010, jobs requiring college degrees grew by 187,000, while jobs requiring some college or an associate's degree fell by 1.75 million and jobs requiring a high school degree or less fell by 5.6 million. [13] Based on economy and job projections calculated by Georgetown University, in 2018, approximately 63% of jobs will require some college education or a degree. [14]</p>	<p>1. Student loan debt is crippling for college graduates. Between 2003 and 2012 the number of 25-year-olds with student debt <u>increased from 25% to 43%</u>, and their average loan balance was \$20,326 in 2012—a 91% increase since 2003. [35] 10% of students graduate with over \$40,000 in debt and about 1% have \$100,000 in debt. [36] The average student borrower graduated in 2011 with \$26,600 in debt. [36] According to the US Congress Joint Economic Committee, approximately 60% of 2011 college graduates have student loan debt balances equal to 60% of their annual income. [37] Missing or being late for loan payments often results in a lower credit score and additional fees, thus escalating the debt problem and potentially jeopardizing future purchases and employment. [36]</p> <p>2. Student loan debt often forces college graduates to live with their parents and delay marriage, financial independence, and other adult milestones. According to a 2012 Federal Reserve Study, 30-year-olds who have never taken out a student loan are now more likely to own homes than those who have taken out loans. Auto loans are also trending down at faster rates for those with student debt history than for those without. [35] In 2013, student loan borrowers delayed</p>

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3. **College graduates are more likely to have health insurance and retirement plans.**

70% of college graduates had access to employer-provided health insurance compared to 50% of high school graduates in 2008. [15] 70% of college graduates 25 years old and older had access to retirement plans in 2008 compared to 65% of associate's degree holders, 55% of high school graduates, and 30% of people who did not complete high school. [11]

4. **College graduates have lower poverty rates.**

The 2008 poverty rate for bachelor's degree holders was 4%, compared to a 12% poverty rate for high school graduates. [11] In 2005, married couples with bachelor's degrees were least likely to be below the poverty line (1.8%) compared to 2.7% of associate's degree holders, 4.6% of couples with some college, and 7.1% of high school graduates. [21] According to the US Census Bureau, 1% of college graduates participated in social support programs like Medicaid, National School Lunch Program, and food stamps compared to 8% of high school graduates in 2008. [11]

5. **College exposes students to diverse people and ideas.** Students live, go to classes, and socialize with other students from around the world and learn from professors with a variety of expertise. The community of people on a college campus means students are likely to make diverse friends and business connections, and, potentially, find a spouse or mate. Access to a variety of people allows college students to learn about different cultures, religions, and

retirement saving (41%), car purchases (40%), home purchases (29%), and marriage (15%). [38] Less than 50% of women and 30% of men had passed the "transition to adulthood" milestones by age 30 (finishing school, moving out of their parents' homes, being financially independent, marrying, and having children); in 1960, 77% of women and 65% of men had completed these milestones by age 30. [39]

3. **Many recent college graduates are un- or underemployed.**

In 2011 50% of college graduates under 25 years old had no job or a part-time job. [4] The unemployment rate for recent college graduates was 8.8% in Feb. 2013, down from 10.4% in 2010, but up from 5.7% in 2007. [41] The underemployment (insufficient work) rate for the class of 2013 was 18.3% [41] According to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, 44% of recent college graduates were underemployed in 2012. [42]

4. **Many people succeed without college degrees.** According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, of the 30 projected fastest growing jobs between 2010 and 2020, five do not require a high school diploma, nine require a high school diploma, four require an associate's degree, six require a bachelor's degree, and six require graduate degrees. [43] The following successful people either never enrolled in college or never completed their college degrees: Richard Branson, founder and chairman of the Virgin Group; Charles Culpepper, owner and CEO of Coca Cola; Ellen Degeneres, comedian and actress; Michael Dell,

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personalities they may have not been exposed to in their home towns, which broadens their knowledge and perspective. In 2004, 79% of people with graduate degrees and 73% of college graduates thought it "very important to try to understand the reasoning behind the opinions of others" compared to 67% of associate degree holders, 64% of high school graduates, and 59% of high school drop-outs. [21]

6. **Earning a college degree is a major life achievement.** College graduation can represent an attainment of the American Dream, the culmination of years of hard work for the student, and the payoff for sacrifices made by supporting parents and friends. Blogger Darrius Mind wrote that his graduation day at Wilberforce University was, "probably the best day of my entire life. That was the day I finished my challenge to myself and also the day I made history in my family, it was the day I EARNED my college degree." [34]

founder of Dell, Inc.; Walt Disney, Disney Corporation founder; Bill Gates, Microsoft founder; Steve Jobs, co-founder of Apple; Wolfgang Puck, chef and restaurateur; Steve Wozniak, co-founder of Apple; Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook. [44]

5. **Learning a trade profession is a better option than college for many young adults.** Trade professions are necessary for society to function, require less than four years of training, and often pay above average wages. The high number of young adults choosing college over learning a trade has created a 'skills gap' in the US and there is now a shortage of 'middle-skill' trade workers like machinists, electricians, plumbers, and construction workers. One 2011 survey of US manufacturers found that 67% reported a "moderate to severe shortage of talent," [53] "Middle-skill" jobs represent half of all jobs in the US that pay middle-class wages. [54] According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, "middle-skill" jobs will make up 45% of projected job openings through 2014, but as of 2012 only 25% of the workforce had the skills to fill those jobs. [55]

PRE-WRITING EXERCISE

SIDE A	SIDE B
College is worth it.	College is not worth it.



Good Supporting Evidence For SIDE A (paraphrase as much as possible)	Good Supporting Evidence For SIDE B (paraphrase as much as possible)

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Which one had the better-supported argument?

Circle one:

SIDE A

SIDE B

In the space provided below, explain WHY you chose SIDE A or SIDE B, using reasoning based on the TEXT. (You can and should use your own words to connect the ideas from the text.)