

# Teacher Package

## English Exemplar Task Grade 9 English – Academic Teacher Package

**Title:** A Supported Opinion Essay on Conflict

### **con-flict**

*Pronunciation:* kán-flikt

*Function:* noun

*Etymology:* Middle English (15th century), from Latin *conflictus* “act of striking together”, from *confligere* “to strike together”, from *com-* + *fligere* “to strike”

### *Definitions*

- 1: fight, battle, war
- 2a: competitive or opposing action of incompatibles: antagonistic state or action (as of divergent ideas, interests, or persons)
- 2b: mental struggle resulting from incompatible or opposing needs, drives, wishes, or external or internal demands
- 3: the opposition of persons or forces that gives rise to the dramatic action in a drama or fiction

(Source: *Merriam-Webster's Online Collegiate Dictionary*, <<http://www.mw.com/home.htm>>)

**Time Requirement:** 8 to 10 periods of 70 minutes each

### **Description of the Task**

Students are required to produce a written supported opinion essay about a conflict that they believe may affect their future. The students select an audience that they believe needs to learn about the conflict. The purpose for writing the supported opinion essay is to persuade the intended audience to accept the opinion. The essay may consider the causes and consequences of the conflict and/or an effective solution to it. Supporting evidence may be drawn from a variety of sources.

### **Final Product**

Students will submit a written supported opinion essay.

### **Assessment and Evaluation**

A task-specific rubric\* will be used to assess the supported opinion essays.

## Expectations Addressed in the Exemplar Task

The exemplar task is based on the following key expectations from three strands: Literature Studies and Reading, Writing, and Language.

### Students will:

1. provide an introduction, body, and conclusion in written reports and short essays;
2. analyse information, ideas, and elements in texts to make inferences about meaning;
3. use specific evidence from a text to support opinions and judgements;
4. structure expository paragraphs using a topic sentence, supporting sentences to develop the topic, connecting words to link the sentences, and a concluding sentence;
5. use a single controlling idea and connecting words to structure a series of paragraphs;
6. select words and phrases appropriate to informal and formal styles, to suit the purpose and intended audience of oral and written work;
7. edit and proofread their own and others' writing, identifying and correcting errors according to the requirements for grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation listed on pages 13 and 14 of the curriculum policy document;
8. identify sources of ideas, information, and quotations in writing and independent research projects.

## Teacher Instructions

### **Prior Knowledge and Skills Required**

Students should have had experience in:

- identifying main ideas and supporting details in literary and informational texts;
- stating an opinion and supporting it with specific evidence from a text;
- making judgements and drawing conclusions about ideas in written materials on the basis of evidence;
- organizing ideas and information in paragraph and essay format;
- using the stages of the writing process;
- using a dictionary and a thesaurus when writing;
- contributing and working constructively in groups;
- comparing their work against task-specific rubrics.

### **Accommodations**

Accommodations that are normally provided in the regular classroom for students with special needs should be provided in the administration of this performance task.

You may wish to review the relevant course profile for specific suggestions for accommodations appropriate for students in special education programs.

\*The rubric is reproduced on page 14 of this document.

**Materials and Resources Required**

- a student package for each student
- one rubric for each student to use to assess the sample supported opinion essay (the essay is printed in Appendix 1).
- index cards or paper and masking tape for the brainstorming activity
- reading materials (You may use the “Suggested Reading Selections From the Approved Anthologies” [Appendix 2], or you may wish to substitute alternative texts.)
- student notebooks for the journal writing activity
- one “Graphic Organizer” for each student (Appendix 3)
- the information sheet “Types of Evidence to Support an Opinion” (Appendix 4)
- the “Editing Checklist for a Supported Opinion Essay” (Appendix 5)
- dictionaries, thesauri, and grammar reference books for use in editing the essays
- a rubber band to bundle the collected essays

**Rubric**

Introduce the task-specific rubric to the students at least one day prior to the administration of the task. Review the rubric with the students and ensure that each student understands the criteria and the descriptions for achievement at each level.

Allow ample class time for a thorough reading and discussion of the assessment criteria outlined in the rubric.

Some students may perform below level 1. It will be important to note the characteristics of their work in relation to the criteria in the assessment rubric and to provide feedback to help them improve.

**Task Instructions**

The following “Prompt to Students” and description of a twelve-step process may be used to introduce the task to the class.

**Prompt to Students**

*Conflicts are all around us. Consider the stories, songs, and television programs we experience every day. It is not surprising that young people feel strongly about conflicts in literature and the media.*

*Write a **supported opinion essay** based on a conflict that you believe may affect your future. For your audience, choose someone who you think needs to learn about the conflict. The purpose of the essay is to persuade the intended audience to accept your opinion.*

*To develop your opinion, you may consider the significance of any or all of the following:*

- *the causes of the conflict*
- *the consequences of the conflict*
- *an effective solution to the conflict*

*You may use evidence from a variety of sources to support your opinion. You will have the equivalent of 8 to 10 periods of 70 minutes to complete the task.*

**Process**

- **Step 1** is to understand the requirements of the exemplar task fully.
- **Step 2** is to understand the criteria described by the assessment rubric.
- **Step 3** is to participate in prewriting activities (e.g., brainstorming, discussion of conflict situations).
- **Step 4** is to select a conflict you believe may affect your future.
- **Step 5** is to select an appropriate audience for your supported opinion essay.
- **Step 6** is to develop your opinion about the conflict that you have selected.
- **Step 7** is to organize your ideas and supporting evidence for the essay (see Appendices 3 and 4).

- **Step 8** is to ensure that your opinion is expressed clearly and is supported by convincing evidence and that the essay is coherent.

NOTE: All writing is to be done in class under teacher supervision.

- **Step 9** is to ensure that the words and phrases used in the essay are appropriate for the purpose, audience, and style.
- **Step 10** is to ensure that all sources of ideas and information have been identified accurately (e.g., use of quotations, parenthetical references, works cited).
- **Step 11** is to use feedback from teacher or peer assessment to revise and edit your essay.
- **Step 12** is to edit and proofread the essay for correct and effective use of language conventions (grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation) and other considerations (see Appendix 5).

The following is a suggested outline for administering the exemplar task over the equivalent of 8 to 10 periods of 70 minutes each.

#### Period 1

Objectives:

- Students will develop an understanding of the exemplar task.
- Students will develop an understanding of the rubric.
- Students will use the rubric to assess a sample supported opinion essay.

Procedure:

- Preview the objectives for period 1.
- Have each student read the “Student Instructions for the Exemplar Task” in the student package, for understanding of the key points. Have students make notes as they read about points that they do not understand. After students have read the instructions, have them work with partners to share their questions and try to help each other to answer the questions. Hold a brief discussion with the whole class to clear up any unanswered questions.
- Review the main elements of the supported opinion essay (e.g., the essay has an introduction, body, and conclusion; a single controlling idea is used to structure a series of paragraphs; specific evidence is used to support the controlling idea and key points).
- Review the task rubric, highlight its key features (e.g., curriculum expectations, categories and criteria, levels of achievement, descriptors), and help each student to understand the meaning of the descriptors for each criterion across the four achievement levels.
- Have students read “Boxed-In” (see Appendix 1: “Sample Supported Opinion Essay”).

- Have partners use the task rubric to assess the sample essay, “Boxed-In”. *Note:* The sample essay contains several minor errors in the use of language conventions. The purpose of the sample essay is to provide opportunities for students to discuss the descriptions of the performance levels in the rubric.
- Hold a brief discussion with the whole class to determine the similarities and differences in their assessments. Probe the reasons for differences of opinion. Help students to develop a common understanding of the descriptors of the achievement levels.
- Emphasize that the rubric will be used to assess their supported opinion essays, so they should refer to it frequently as they work on their essays.
- Ask students to bring their anthology textbooks to the next class.

#### Period 2

Objectives:

- Students will participate in prewriting activities.
- Students will explore conflict situations in reading materials.
- Students will select conflicts for their essays.

Procedure:

- Briefly review the objectives of period 1 and preview the objectives of period 2.
- Ask students to work in small groups to brainstorm conflict situations. Have each student write a conflict situation on a card and place the card in the centre of the table. Ask groups to sort their cards and create groupings of similar conflict situations. Ask groups to determine category headings for each of the groupings.
- Ask groups to share their categories and conflicts. Post their cards to create a class list or web of conflicts. Have students note similarities and differences in the categories and placement of conflict situations.
- Have students choose and read one of the reading selections and identify the type of conflict represented in the text. Remind students of the types of conflicts identified in the activity above.
- Have students write about:
  - the type of conflict depicted in the anthology selection (e.g., a conflict related to the environment, racism, teen violence, poverty, consumerism);
  - what they already know about the type of conflict.
- In small groups, have each student in turn describe to the other group members the type of conflict in the selected reading.
- Ask groups to review and add to the class list of conflicts.
- Ask students which conflicts they believe will have the greatest impact in the future.
- Ask students to rank order the conflicts.
- Ask students to review the updated list and note a conflict they may wish to use as the basis for the supported opinion essay.

**Period 3**

Objectives:

- Students will consider possible causes, consequences, and solutions for their selected conflict.
- Students will select audiences for their essays.
- Students will write a draft of their essay.

Procedure:

- Briefly review the objectives of period 2 and preview the objectives of period 3.
- Have each student work independently to consider possible causes, consequences, and solutions to the selected conflict. Students may wish to use a graphic organizer to record their thoughts and formulate their opinions (see Appendix 3).
- Have each student select an appropriate audience for the supported opinion essay.
- Have each student write a discovery draft to express an opinion about the selected conflict. The purpose of the draft is to use language to explore their thoughts about the significance of the conflict.

**Periods 4 to 7**

Objectives:

- Students will review different types of evidence.
- Students will select evidence to support their opinions.
- Students will use the steps of the writing process to develop their essays.
- Students will use feedback from peer or teacher formative assessment to improve their supported opinion essays.

Procedure:

- Briefly review the objectives of period 3 and preview the objectives of periods 4 to 7.
- Use Appendix 4: “Types of Evidence to Support an Opinion” to review types of evidence, their definitions, and illustrative examples based on the sample essay, “Boxed-In” (Appendix 1).
- Have students consider evidence they might use to support their opinions and meet the writing purpose of persuading the intended audience to accept their opinions.
- Have students use the steps in the writing process to draft, revise, edit, and proofread their supported opinion essays.
- Students are to do all of their writing in class under teacher supervision. Do **NOT** allow them to take any of their work home.
- To assist students with editing their essays, refer them to Appendix 5: “Editing Checklist for a Supported Opinion Essay”. To facilitate editing of their own essays, provide students with dictionaries, thesauri, and grammar reference textbooks, as required and available.

- Have students use copies of the rubric to provide peers with feedback to improve their essays.
- Have each student prepare a final copy of the supported opinion essay to be submitted for assessment by an external scorer.
- Have each student identify the intended audience on the title page.

## APPENDIX 1: Sample Supported Opinion Essay\*

Audience: The Town Council

### Boxed-In

As reported by a local newspaper, three mature trees were cut down in a forest near a residential community. When they found out what had happened, the residents of the area became very angry. They were upset because they had not been consulted before the trees had been removed. Second, they did not like that they trees had been cut down. When they found out that another 15 trees were scheduled to be chopped down during the next week, they formed a human blockade by chaining themselves to the trees. If this tactic was unsuccessful in saving the trees, they threatened to burn down the rest of the forest as a protest (Greigen, 87-88).

Effective two-way communication about the reasons for cutting down the trees might have prevented this conflict. The conflict in this situation is based on a lack of information that local residents need to understand why the decision was made to cut down the mature trees. This conflict might have been avoided if the local residents had been invited to attend public meetings about the decision, and if they had an opportunity to express their views and to learn the reasons for the decision before it was finalized. It is not too late to provide them with the facts to help them to understand why the trees need to be removed.

The local residents need to know that only old and diseased box elder trees will be cut down. The box elder, or *Acer negundo*, is a type of maple tree that is widespread throughout the United States, southern Canada, Europe, and China. In Canada, the box elder is often called the Manitoba maple. On farms in the west it is used as a wind barrier. It is not a very pretty tree because of its irregular shape. It grows more like a weed than a tree. The three trees that were cut down were 50 years old, and their limbs had cracked during recent ice storms. Also their trunks had become infested with bugs (Greigen, 88). These facts should be printed and given to the protesters so that they can understand why the box elders should be removed.

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\* Note: This sample essay contains several minor errors in the use of language conventions. The essay is included here for discussion purposes, not as an example of a "perfect" essay.

Furthermore, research shows that many people who suffer from allergies are in danger of getting hay fever from the pollen of box elder leaves: "All maple pollen is highly allergenic, but *A. negundo* is the only species which pollinates exclusively by wind and causes the most problems for hay-fever sufferers.

Box-elder pollen is regarded as the most allergenic spring tree pollen. (Multidata, Inc.). Therefore, nearby residents who suffer from hay fever should be informed of these facts so that they can understand why the box elders should be removed.

Some of the residents who have environmental concerns need to know that allowing trees to grow randomly sometimes is not good for the ecosystem that they share (Thomas, 43). Box elders grow to heights of 50-75 feet and their thick canopy prevents sunlight from reaching the forest floor. Cutting down the box elder trees will allow more sunlight to reach the floor of the forest which will regenerate plants and shrubs and provide food for butterflies, birds, and ground animals. This is the most important reason that the box elders had to be removed. The residents need to know that there is a plan to replant the forest in the spring with a variety of saplings to replace the sickly box elders that have been cut down.

In conclusion, the local residents who are protesting the sudden removal of several mature trees in the neighbouring forest need to be the facts and the reasons behind the decision before they take drastic action such as burning down the forest. They need to be reassured that the decision will benefit their community. They need to be assured that in the future they will be consulted about all decisions that affect them directly. Two-way communication is essential so that people do not become "boxed-in" a conflict situation.

### Works Cited

- Greigen, Mort. "Locals See Red in Forest Fiasco". in Makita Montrose, *Readings for a Lifetime*. Toronto: Square Peg Press, 1999. 87-91.
- Multidata, Inc. "The Pollen Monitor". Vol 3, No 2. March/April 1996.  
<<http://www.aerobiology.org/Trees.Maple.HTM>>
- Thomas, Brytt. "Towards Healthy Ecosystems." *Nature Now*. March 1997: 37-54.

### APPENDIX 2: Suggested Reading Selections From the Approved Anthologies

**Note:** The following selections are suggestions only. Teachers may use other texts to provide a springboard for students to think about the implications of conflict situations.

**Crossroads 9** (Gage)

- “Acceptance”, 33
- “Halting Hatred”, 296-98
- “Signposts of the Journey”, 288-90
- “Thank You Ma’am”, 72-76
- “The Leaving”, 106-17

**Elements of English 9** (Harcourt Brace)

- “Borders”, 167-74
- “On the Sidewalk, Bleeding”, 98-104
- “Teens Matter to the Canadian Economy”, 212-14
- “The Jade Peony”, 84-90
- “Suitcase Lady”, 184-85

**Endless Possibilities** (Oxford)

- “Equal Opportunity”, 214
- “Voices of Chinese Canadian Women”, 223-24
- “If you think”, 259
- “The Little-Rock Nine”, 228-33
- “Remember”, 261

**Nelson English: Literature & Media 9** (Nelson)

- “Monologues for Teenagers”, 236-38
- “A Mother’s Heart Aches”, 166-67
- “Exposure to Secondhand Smoke”, 161-65
- “We Are Concerned About the Poor All Over the World”, 172-74
- “What Do I Remember of the Evacuation?”, 199-200

**On Common Ground** (Oxford)

- “Dances with History”, 153-56
- “Growing Up Touareg”, 313-15
- “I Want To Be Beautiful So Bad, It Makes Me Sick”, 7-10
- “Plenty”, 310
- “Teens Make Their Own Peace”, 215-16

**SightLines 9** (Prentice Hall)

- “In Service”, 216-17
- “Montreal 1962”, 27-30
- “Once Upon a Time”, 39-43
- “Think Like a Weightlifter, Think Like a Woman”, 64-65
- “Two Prisoners”, 7

### APPENDIX 3: Graphic Organizer

#### CONSIDERING CONFLICT

Describe your selected conflict.

#### CONSIDERING CAUSES

What may have caused this conflict?

#### CONSIDERING CONSEQUENCES

What are some consequences of this conflict?

#### CONSIDERING SOLUTIONS

What are some solutions to this conflict?

#### DEVELOPING AN OPINION

#### Appendix 4: Types of Evidence to Support an Opinion

Types	Definitions	Examples Based on an Environmental Conflict
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An example is a specific illustration of a general pattern or truth.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The box elder is an example of an undesirable maple tree because of its weak limbs and trunk that can become infested with rot and bugs.</i></li> </ul>
Facts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A fact is a true statement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>In October 1998 several mature box elder trees were cut down in a nearby forest.</i></li> </ul>
Quotations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A direct quotation states the exact words of someone.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>An angry area resident commented: "It took them one day to butcher the forest but it will take years and years to have tall trees here again."</i></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An indirect quotation is a paraphrase of a direct quotation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Some environmentalists claim that too many tall trees in a small area are harmful to the ecosystem on the forest floor.</i></li> </ul>
Reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A reason explains an idea.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Recent ice storms have severely damaged the limbs of several box elder trees in the forest.</i></li> </ul>
Research Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research findings are conclusions of a research study.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>In a study conducted by an allergy research laboratory, 74 out of 180 patients were found to be allergic to the pollen from box elder trees.</i></li> </ul>
Statistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statistics are facts that use numbers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The box elder tree grows more than 18 inches per year to a height of 50-75 feet</i></li> </ul>

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#### Appendix 5: Editing Checklist for a Supported Opinion Essay

##### Directions:

Read the final copy of your supported opinion essay.

Use the following checklist to note the elements that you have used in your essay.

Elements	Check ✓
The essay expresses an opinion that gives a clear, thoughtful, and complete account of the significance of one or more aspects of a conflict (e.g., causes, consequences, possible solutions).	
The essay has an introduction, body, and conclusion.	
The essay develops a single controlling idea.	
Connecting words are used to link paragraphs.	
Each paragraph has a topic sentence, body, and concluding sentence.	
Connecting words are used to link sentences in each paragraph.	
The supporting evidence is relevant to the controlling idea.	
The supporting evidence is sufficient to support the opinion.	
Words and phrases are appropriate to the purpose, audience, and style.	
Words have been spelled correctly.	
Grammar has been used correctly and effectively.	
Punctuation has been used correctly and effectively.	
All sources of ideas, information, and quotations have been identified accurately.	
The essay meets the purpose of persuading the intended audience to accept the opinion.	

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