

Writing Proficiency Exam: Spring 2010

To ensure anonymity, please write **your name**, the **name of your teacher**, and the **name of your high school** on the back of the last page.

Steps to Success:

- Write only on one side of the paper.
- Outline carefully before writing, and proofread when done.
- Cross out mistakes neatly and keep the writing as legible as possible.
- Remember the importance of vivid examples.

College-level Writing:

- You are being tested for college-level writing, so be aware of how you present your ideas, particularly if the topic or your views could be considered controversial. Avoid racial, ethnic, or sexist slurs or stereotypes, inflammatory rhetoric, and profanity. Approach the issue formally and demonstrate an awareness of your audience; you are not being judged on your views, but on how well you present them—the writing itself.

Write a 60-minute essay addressing the following prompt:

In his article on a black war hero from World War I, Leonard Pitts describes one reader's stubbornness in the face of clear factual evidence that he is wrong. Pitts labels this man "the Zeitgeist personified," which suggests this sort of one-sided and unbending opinion about politically charged issues represents the spirit of present-day political debate.

In an organized essay, discuss the nature of the debate about a current political issue—gay marriage, national health care, President Obama's citizenship, the war against terrorism, tea party activism, immigration reform, or even more broadly how polarized we are by party, Democrat vs. Republican—and assess what divides the two sides to this issue.

Are we so paralyzed by our own worldview that we are unable to understand an opposing argument, unable to weigh the facts in an issue, and unaware of our own prejudices and how they shape our opinion?