

OPEN RESPONSE

SCRIPT FOR PRESENTERS – For *Open Response Writing Review* in Department Meetings

- A. Begin by reminding people that this is a review of the open response workshops we have now done for the past four years. Mention the follow:
- Open responses are included in all four testing areas – English/Language Arts, Math, Science, and History/Social Science. This year Science will be given only as a pilot tryout in May, and there will be a History MCAS tryout.
 - The success rate we have had is impressive – Four years ago in ELA we beat the state average in three of four open responses; in May of 2002 we beat the state average on every open response question and last year we beat the state in 3 out of four again. However, we are continually being challenged by more difficult reading selections and questions that require students to tap into higher level thinking.
 - We have had success because the school worked together to prepare the students appropriately – we will be attacking this in the same way this year.
- B. Ask teachers to look at the first page of their packet. Review with them the opening paragraph stating *this is a PROCESS – consisting of active reading, thinking, and writing. It is important to have your students go through the steps of that process, rather than having them just begin writing the open response. It is also important to stress with your students that going through the steps is not voluntary, but required; the students should earn credit for the steps as well as credit for the actual open response. This should not be assigned initially as homework; the steps in this process should be monitored in class. Even if they indicate they have done this previously, stress with them that this is a skill that needs to be practiced.*

Also add the following:

- Because of the number of students we have who transfer into BHS and the number of student who continue to fail the MCAS (we had almost 500 take the November Retest) this should not be viewed as a freshman/sophomore activity.
 - This open response format also provides excellent instruction and practice in writing that students may transfer to all of their classes as well as in preparation for college and with the SAT which now contains a writing section.
- C. Tell them that we will be taking them through this packet, which provides for them the lesson they will be asked to teach with all of their classes on open response writing. Not that all the included handouts are listed for them on pages one and two of their packet.
- D. Ask them to turn to page THREE in their handout. Note the following:
- The words listed on this sheet are used frequently on the MCAS in all four testing areas.
 - Please try to use a variety of these words not only on the open response activity, but also on your tests, homework, and class work.
 - Many of your departments have open response questions already written – those can certainly be used in your classes – see your department head for those questions. Please be certain that the reading passages and questions are challenging.
 - Whenever possible, please use words from this list with your students.

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- E. Ask them to turn to page four in the packet and tell them we will be walking them through these ten steps, just as they should take their students through the steps before assigning them an open response. Remind them of the following:
- Open response questions are part of ALL four tests (in ELA, Math, Science, and History). The students are asked to read an excerpt and then answer multiple-choice and open response questions on that reading.
 - These ten steps should be used for all open responses.
- F. Say to the faculty: Now we will go through the ten steps and we will use the excerpt included in your packet on the Book of Ruth as an example. We will be asking you to refer to various pages in the handout as we move through these steps.
- The first is to **READ THE QUESTION CAREFULLY** to determine what the question is asking. Look at the questions for the Book of Ruth, page 5 in handout.
 - The second step is to **CIRCLE OR UNDERLINE KEY WORDS** in the question – it is important to stress that the students need to be very clear about what the question is asking.
 - The third step is to **RESTATE THE QUESTION AS A THESIS** leaving blanks (Turn to page six in the handout). Essentially the students should flip the question into their thesis statement. This is crucial to the process, and it is an area with which our students continue to have difficulty. *Note: Complex questions require that students develop more complex thesis statements, perhaps requiring that they write more than one sentence. Please assist students with this process.*
 - The fourth step is to **READ THE PASSAGE CAREFULLY**, keeping the question in mind. This leads to the fifth step, which is
 - To **TAKE NOTES THAT RESPOND TO THE QUESTION. BRAINSTORM AND MAP OUT YOUR ANSWER** (see the bottom of page 6 in the packet). Students should be reminded that they should be doing **ACTIVE READING**. They should be taking notes, circling and underlining key words, using brackets – whatever helps them develop their answer. **FOLLOW READING STRATEGIES DEVELOPED IN THE WORKSHOPS!**
 - The sixth step is to **COMPLETE YOUR THESIS**. This should be based on the student's findings.
 - The seventh step is to **WRITE YOUR RESPONSE CAREFULLY USING YOUR MAP** (map sample on page 6 of the packet). The open response structure is included on page 7 of the packet.
 - The eighth step is to **STRATEGICALLY REPEAT KEY WORDS FROM YOUR THESIS IN YOUR BODY AND IN YOUR END SENTENCE**. This is mentioned on the open response structure on page 7 of the packet.
 - The ninth step is to **PARAGRAPH YOUR RESPONSE**. The format for the paragraph structure is provided on page 7 of the packet. Review that page.
 - The final step is to **REREAD AN EDIT YOUR RESPONSE**. Note that on page 8 of your packet we have included a sample student answer to the Book of Ruth excerpt.
- G. On page 9 of the packet we have included a sample answer page from the MCAS tests. It is important to note and to inform the students that they cannot go **BEYOND** the box provided on this page. They can choose to double up lines (two lines of writing within one space), but that they cannot go beyond the space provided.

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- H.** The next issue we want to deal with is grading. On page 10 of your handout is a sample state rubric. Although the questions differ, the language in the rubric doesn't vary significantly. Notice that for a 4, the wording is insightful analysis; for a 3 it is general analysis; for a 2 it is literal or partial analysis; for a 1 it is minimal explanation; and for a 0 it is incorrect or irrelevant. Please note that a student does not necessarily earn any points for writing something. They can receive a zero for writing a lengthy answer that is off topic.
- I.** On page 11 of the packet we have provided a rubric that we developed for BHS that corresponds to the state rubric, but one that we feel provides the students and you with more specific information on criteria that should be included in their answers. In regards to this BHS rubric:
- It was devised to emphasize (point #1 on the BHS rubric) that answers are graded on clearly stated thesis that answers the question accurately.
 - Emphasis should be placed on the organization and paragraphing of the response (point #2 on the BHS rubric). This helps all students better organize their work and keep their ideas more focused. Two or three specific examples should be included.
 - The content of the response is important (point #3 on the BHS rubric). The examples and information the student provides must be correct. A quality response is well written and correct.
 - The use of specific examples with quotations and clear explanations that connect to the thesis is critical to a strong response (point #4 on the BHS rubric).
 - Strategic repetition of key words is emphasized (point #5 on the BHS rubric). This is a technique that serves to keep students focused on the question. For example, if the question asks the student to *discuss the attitude of the narrator toward her job (sample from Book of Ruth excerpt)*, then the student should have the key words *negative (or some equivalent) narrator, attitude, and job* in his/her thesis, body paragraphs, and conclusion.
 - Open responses are not graded on spelling, grammar, and punctuation, but since clarity of thought is a criterion, then clear, complete sentences are emphasized (point #6 on BHS Rubric). Note, teachers should not be concerned about spelling errors or minor mechanical errors unless they become so distracting that they interfere with the clarity of the thinking.
 - Point #7 on the BHS Rubric. Although there is no requirement for length, it is important that the students explain their thinking sufficiently and provide appropriate examples with explanation. That impacts the length of their work. In addition, the BHS rubric asks that the work be neat and legible. Again, this is not part of the grading, but we do not want students losing points unnecessarily.
- J.** Suggestions for using the open response grading system:
- After you have collected the open responses, you may want to do a follow up lesson and present the class two or three representative student samples showing a high, middle, and low level response (names omitted, of course). Use the BHS rubric to have students score these papers so that everyone sees and agrees upon the criteria. After that, you could use the BHS rubric to score the papers yourself, or you could pair the students and have them score each others' papers using the BHS rubric. This may also help with the grading – students can see what a good paper looks like, and they do much of the correcting.
 - There is a high correlation between the state rubric and the BHS rubric. At the bottom of the BHS guide, we have assigned point values to the four categories – Advanced,

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Proficient, Needs Improvement, and Failing. The BHS Advanced correlates to the state 4, BHS Proficient correlates to the 3, BHS Needs Improvement correlates to the 2, BHS failing correlates to the 1, and the 0 would be assigned if the student is totally incorrect or off topic.

K. Final comments to keep in mind about the open response:

- For many students, particularly those in academic prep classes, this process may take more than one day.
- Students often face very difficult vocabulary on the MCAS, so stressing vocabulary in all content areas can only help. Remind students of vocabulary strategies that may be helpful.
- The MCAS is VERY lengthy and requires tremendous stamina on the part of the students. In most sessions students are asked to write three or four open responses. Many of our students spend all day testing.
- Open responses are part of all four testing areas. This year the students will have English/Language Arts and Math only; science will be a pilot and History/Social Science will be a tryout this year.
- As in the past three years, a calendar of implementation has been sent out so that our students write Open Responses in all disciplines to help them prepare for the May MCAS.

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REVIEW OF OPEN RESPONSE WRITING

Please remember that answering an open response is a **PROCESS** – consisting of active reading, thinking, and writing. It is important to have your students go through the steps of that process, rather than having them just begin writing the open response. It is also important to stress with them that going through the steps is not voluntary, but required; they should earn credit for the steps as well as credit for the actual open response. This should not be assigned initially as homework; the steps in this process should be monitored in class. Even if they indicate they have done this previously, stress with them that this is a skill that needs to be practiced.

Enclosed please find the following:

1. **KEY WORDS** (page 3) – The words listed on this sheet are used frequently on the MCAS in all four testing areas. Please try to use a variety of these words not only on the open response activity, but also on your tests, homework, and class work.
2. **MCAS: OPEN RESPONSE STEPS TO FOLLOW** (page 4) – These ten steps have resulted in our students’ improvement in the open responses in all testing areas. These should be practiced with the students. Note: In English/Language Arts the students write open responses based upon reading passages (the next page provides a sample); in other testing areas they must generate their own answer and bring content knowledge to their answer.
3. **BOOK OF RUTH EXCERPT** (page 5) – An example of an open response with the accompanying reading selection. Stress **ACTIVE** reading – circle and underline key words in the question to make sure students know exactly what they are being asked to do.
4. **BOOK OF RUTH QUESTION SHEET** (page 6) – This sheet demonstrates how the student should flip the question into the thesis statement and then map out a response. Remind them that in developing their answer they should return to the reading, reread it, take notes, circle or underline information that relates to the question – active reading on their part.
5. **OPEN RESPONSE STRUCTURE** (page 7) – This sheet provides the format for the open response, using the map they created to develop their answer.
6. **SAMPLE RESPONSE** (page 8) – A sample response to the Book of Ruth question is provided.
7. **MCAS PAGE** (page 9) – Students are restricted to the space provided on the test – they may not go beyond the borders set on the page in their answer booklets. They may double up in each line, but not go beyond the space. This is fairly typical of the space provided.
8. **STATE RUBRIC EXAMPLE** (page 10) – This is a sample rubric used by the DOE. Note the difference in wording for a 4, 3, 2, 1, or 0. Also, it is important to stress with the students that they can receive a “0” even if they have written a lengthy answer if it is off topic or incorrect. Many students seem to have the mistaken impression that they will receive at least a point or two if they write something. That is not correct.

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9. **BHS RUBRIC** (page 11) – We wanted to be more specific than the state rubric and help you and the students understand the grading process of the open responses. Toward that end we have developed our own BHS rubric. There are a few suggested uses – you may use the rubric to grade the open responses yourself, you may pair the students to have them grade each other’s papers, or perhaps have the student apply the rubric to his/her own paper. You may want to present the class with a few student samples (names deleted) that show a high, middle, and low score response. At the bottom of the BHS rubric we have correlated the points to the state rubric so that you and the students can classify their responses into the Advanced, Proficient, Needs Improvement, or Failing category.

Final reminders

- For many students, particularly those in academic prep classes, this process may take two days.
- Students often face very difficult vocabulary on the MCAS, so stressing vocabulary in all content areas can only help.
- The MCAS is VERY lengthy and requires tremendous stamina on the part of the students. In most sessions students are asked to write three or four open responses. Many of our students spend all day testing.
- Open responses are part of all four testing areas. This year the students will have English/Language Arts and Math only; Science will only be a question tryout and History/Social Science will have no test this year.
- As in the past two years, a calendar of implementation will be sent out so that our students write open responses in all disciplines to help them prepare for the May MCAS. Many departments have open response questions already developed in different content areas, so check with your department head.

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KEY DIRECTION WORDS IN ESSAY QUESTIONS

ANALYZE: Break down a problem or situation into separate parts or relationships and examine each part.

APPLY: Relate a particular idea to a given subject.

COMPARE: Use examples to show how things are similar and different, with greater emphasis on the similarities.

CONTRAST: Use examples to show how things are different in one or more important ways.

DEFINE: Clarify meaning by giving a clear, concise definition of a term. Generally, to define consists of identifying the class to which a term belongs and telling how it differs from other things in that class.

DESCRIBE: Give a detailed sketch or impression of the subject or topic.

DISCUSS: Examine and talk about all sides of a subject or issue in a carefully organized manner.

EVALUATE: Present your opinion and judgment of something. Explain the criteria you are using to judge something and apply that criteria to specific examples.

EXPLAIN: Make clear how something (or someone) works, what something (or someone) is like, or why something happens or works the way it does. This term is similar to *discuss*, but places more emphasis on cause-effect relationships or step-by-step sequences.

ILLUSTRATE: Give examples as a means of explaining your thinking.

PREDICT: Explain what you think will happen, and base that predication on evidence.

PROVE: Bring out the truth by providing evidence and facts to back up a point.

STATE: Present a brief, concise statement of a position, fact, or point of view.

SUMMARIZE: Present the main points of an issue in a shortened form. Details, illustration and examples are usually not given.

TRACE: Present in step-by-step sequence a series of facts or events that are somehow related. Usually the facts are presented chronologically to show the development of the subject.

MCAS: STEPS TO FOLLOW

- 1. READ QUESTION CAREFULLY.**
- 2. CIRCLE OR UNDERLINE KEY WORDS.**
- 3. RESTATE QUESTION AS THESIS
(LEAVING BLANKS).**
- 4. READ PASSAGE CAREFULLY.**
- 5. TAKE NOTES THAT RESPOND TO THE QUESTION.

BRAINSTORM & MAP OUT YOUR ANSWER.**
- 6. COMPLETE YOUR THESIS.**
- 7. WRITE YOUR RESPONSE CAREFULLY,

USING YOUR MAP AS A GUIDE.**
- 8. STRATEGICALLY REPEAT KEY WORDS FROM

THESIS IN YOUR BODY AND IN YOUR END

SENTENCE.**
- 9. PARAGRAPH YOUR RESPONSE.**
- 10. REREAD AND EDIT YOUR RESPONSE.**

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THE BOOK OF RUTH Excerpt

QUESTION: Explain the narrator's attitude toward her job. Include evidence from the excerpt to support your answer.

The Trim ‘N Tidy dry cleaners is a low square white stucco building with glass window so you can look out and see the trucks going by. Trim ‘N Tidy: it sounds like the perfect place to be. It’d be funny if that’s what planet earth were called. There were rows and rows of plastic bags with coats and sweaters, dresses and blankets, men’s suits and quilts – everything you could think of that attracted dirt. Every now and then an idiotic girl brought in her bathing suit because it said *Dry Clean Only*. May and I stood at the counter to take the clothes and weigh them and write up the tickets. It was the only place in about four towns for cleaning so we got everybody’s dirty – *soiled*, we were supposed to say – garments. After we weighed the clothes we were to look them over and mark the spots, and take off the buttons that could get wrecked by the chemicals. Artie, he’s the boss, and Louise, the steamer, and Debra did the work in the back. There were enough clothes in Trim ‘N Tidy to make a mountain for people to ski down. After the clothes were clean May and I sewed the buttons back on, wrapped up the articles in plastic, and put the number stickers on so we would know who owned what. We were called the finishers.

At first I thought I’d never get used to the smell. You feel it in your veins. My breath smelled like dry cleaners. I could feel the odor in my mouth and on my teeth. I could taste it in my chicken soup from my thermos at lunch. I could feel that smell behind my eyeballs.

I watched the trucks flashing by the window, taking pop and flour and hogs and junk to places far away. Maybe they were carrying Daisy to see the world, down in Kentucky. I stared at people’s faces when they weren’t paying attention to me, and I made up stories about their lives. I imagined how the elderly ladies with professional permanents and blue handbags lived alone in three-story houses with their small dogs and their gardens. They were so prim when they came into Trim ‘N Tidy. They were doing their spring cleaning all year long, getting their blankets and curtains freshened up. They dabbed their runny eyes with immaculate white handkerchiefs. I watched the farmers come in with their wives. I watched them stand in the doorway, shuffling back and forth in their tall rubber boots. They smelled like cows; they were going to smell like cows even after they were dead. They didn’t say anything. They looked big and dumb, like being with a herd their whole lives had made them mute. I saw the little children sniff the air and turn up their noses. I saw all of Stillwater passing by. Nothing escaped my attention. If I didn’t keep my hands busy I had to think, Here goes my life; I’m going to spend the rest of my days working at Trim ‘N Tidy. I couldn’t stand thinking there wasn’t anything more left for me so I worked at a frantic pace to keep my mind still.

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Excerpt from The Book of Ruth, a novel written by Jane Hamilton

In her novel The Book of Ruth author Jane Hamilton describes the struggles of Ruth Dahl, a young woman growing up in a small-town environment of poverty and hardship. Without opportunities for a better future, Ruth spends her days working as a finisher at the Trim 'N Tidy Cleaners. As you read the excerpt, think about Ruth's attitude toward her job, and about how she reveals her attitude.

Prompt

After reading the excerpt from Jane Hamilton's novel The Book of Ruth identify the narrator's attitude towards her job at the Trim 'N Tidy Cleaners, and explain how she reveals that attitude. Use relevant and specific evidence from the text to support your response.

The **student restates the prompt** as a thesis statement, **leaving blanks** if necessary:

In this excerpt from Jane Hamilton's novel The Book of Ruth the narrator shows a _____ attitude toward her job; she is _____,
_____ and _____.

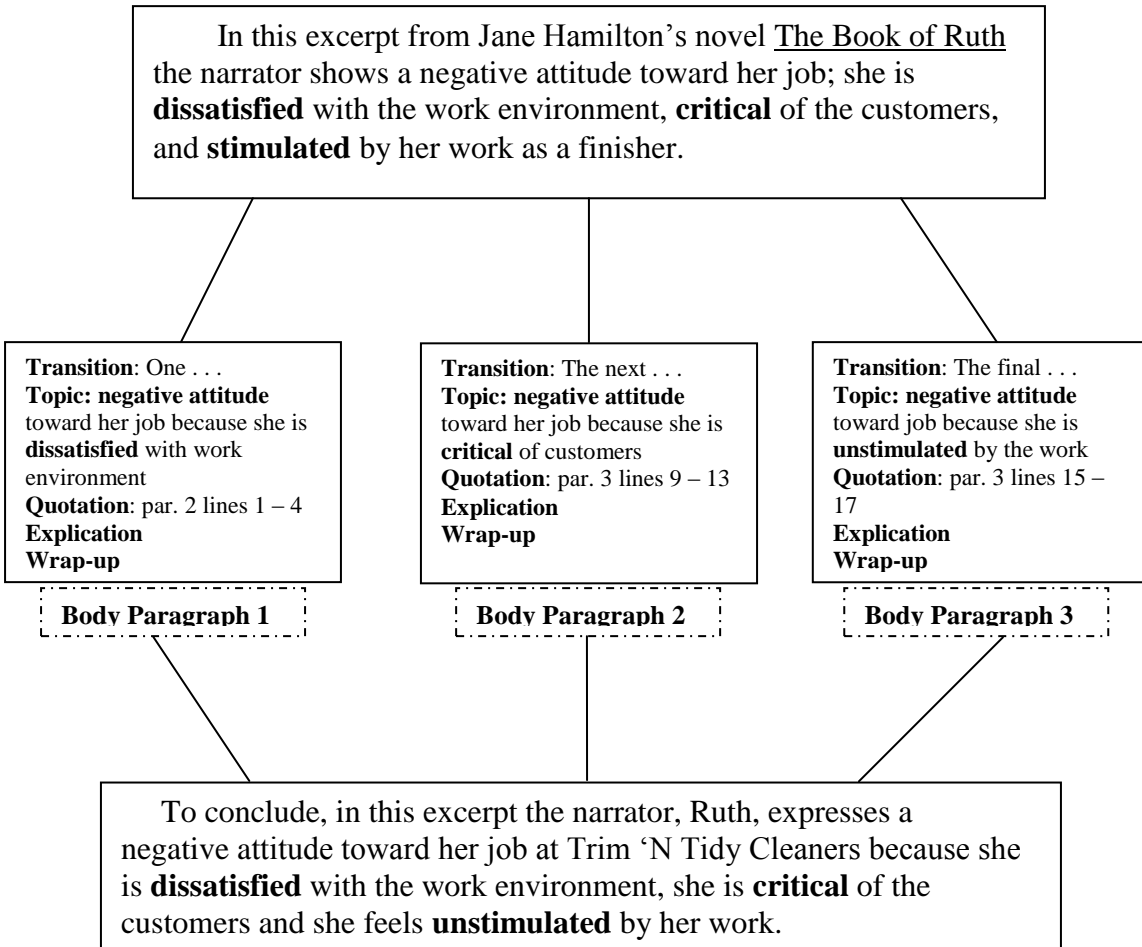
After reading the excerpt, the **student completes the thesis statement**, filling in any blanks:

In this excerpt from Jane Hamilton's novel The Book of Ruth the narrator shows a negative attitude toward her job; she is dissatisfied with the work environment, critical of the customers and unstimulated by her work as a finisher.

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After completing the thesis statement, the **student creates a map** in order to **organize** the response:

Thesis Statement



Restatement of Thesis

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OPEN RESPONSE STRUCTURE

Write a **THESIS STATEMENT** that uses **KEY WORDS** from the question.

Write a **TRANSITION** using **KEY WORDS** from the **THESIS STATEMENT** to introduce your **first EXAMPLE**, providing some detail or information for the reader about the example. Then, lead into a **QUOTATION** that connects with the example. Follow with an **EXPLANATION** that uses **KEY WORDS** from the **THESIS** to **CONNECT** it to the **EXAMPLE** and **QUOTATION**.

Write a **TRANSITION** using **KEY WORDS** from the **THESIS STATEMENT** to introduce your **second EXAMPLE**, providing some detail or information for the reader about the example. Then, lead into a **QUOTATION** that connects with the example. Follow with an **EXPLANATION** that uses **KEY WORDS** from the **THESIS** and **CONNECTS** it to the **EXAMPLE** and **QUOTATION**.

Write a **TRANSITION** using **KEY WORDS** from the **THESIS STATEMENT** to introduce your **third EXAMPLE**, providing some detail or information for the reader about the example. Then, lead into a **QUOTATION** that connects with the example. Follow with an **EXPLANATION** that uses **KEY WORDS** from the **THESIS** and **CONNECTS** it to the **EXAMPLE** and **QUOTATION**.

Write a **CONCLUDING STATEMENT** that repeats the **THESIS** and **KEY WORDS** from the question.

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Sample Open Response

Excerpt from **The Book of Ruth**

In this excerpt from Jane Hamilton's novel **The Book of Ruth** the narrator shows a **negative attitude toward her job**; she is **dissatisfied with the work environment**, **critical of the customers** and **unstimulated by her work as a finisher**.

One example of the narrator's **negative attitude toward her job is her dissatisfaction with the work environment**. She seems to suggest that Trim 'N Tidy Cleaners is a dangerous place to work. She points out that the chemicals used in the cleaning process are **strong enough to wreck buttons**. In addition, she **complains** about the odor, stating, ". . . I thought I'd never get used to **the smell**. . . . My breath smelled like dry cleaners. . . . I could feel **the odor** in my mouth . . . on my teeth . . . in my chicken soup . . . behind my eyeballs" (1). Because the narrator gives such specific **complaints** about the environment at the cleaners, she clearly expresses her **negative attitude and her dissatisfaction**.

The next example of the narrator's **negative attitude** toward her job is her **critical attitude toward the customers** of Trim 'N Tidy Cleaners. She states, ". . . an **idiotic** girl brought in her bathing suit . . ." and **continues to criticize** saying, "They **smelled** like cows . . . they looked **big and dumb**, like being with a **herd** . . . had made them **mute**" (1). The narrator's comments show that she thinks of the customers as animals. She does not enjoy meeting and talking to them; she does not admire them. Instead, she voices her disrespect and disdain. Clearly, the narrator's **negative attitude toward her job includes her lack of respect for the customers**.

The final example of the narrator's negative attitude toward her job is her boredom and **dissatisfaction** with the work. Her comments make the tasks seem **uninteresting and dull**, and she is not stimulated by the work of a finisher. She states, ". . . Here goes my life; I'm going to spend the rest of my days working at Trim 'N Tidy. I couldn't stand thinking there wasn't anything more left for me . . ." (1). The narrator's **negative attitude suggests that she believes the job is a waste of her time and a waste of her life**.

To conclude, in this excerpt the narrator, Ruth, expresses a **negative attitude** toward her job at Trim 'N Tidy Cleaners because she is **dissatisfied with the work environment**, **she is critical of the customers** and **she feels unstimulated by her work**.

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MCAS PAGE

A large rectangular area with a solid border, containing 25 horizontal dotted lines for writing.

9.

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WRITER'S NAME _____

DATE _____

CONTENT	FORM	
<p>8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response contains a clear thesis and insightfully answers all parts of the question. • Response provides relevant and specific textual evidence. • Explanations of evidence are clear and accurate, and demonstrate superior understanding of the material. 	<p>4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response contains sophisticated and effective use of transitions and strategic repetition indicating complete control of the material. • Response is logically and effectively organized in its thesis, paragraphing, and sequencing of examples. • Response contains clear sentence structure with few or no errors. 	
<p>6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response contains a clear thesis and adequately answers all parts of the question. • Response provides relevant but general textual evidence. • Explanations of evidence are mostly clear and accurate, and demonstrate good understanding of the material. 	<p>3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response contains adequate but simplistic use of transitions and strategic repetition. • Response is organized in its thesis, paragraphing, and sequencing of examples. • Response contains clear sentence structure with no distracting errors. 	<p>LEGIBILITY</p> <p>1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to read <p>0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to read
<p>4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response contains a thesis but only partially answers the question. • Response provides a mix of accurate and inaccurate textual evidence. • Explanations of evidence are vague and/or demonstrate limited understanding of the material. 	<p>2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response contains some inappropriate use of transitions and strategic repetition. • Response demonstrates lapses in the organization of its thesis, paragraphing, and/or sequencing of examples. • Response contains lapses in sentence structure that interfere with the clarity of thought. 	
<p>2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response contains a thesis but only minimally answers the question. • Response provides insufficient and/or largely inaccurate textual evidence. • Explanations of evidence are unclear and/or demonstrate minimal understanding of the material. 	<p>1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response contains incorrect or inadequate use of transitions and strategic repetition. • Response reflects minimal organization of its thesis, paragraphing, and/or sequencing of examples. • Response contains major errors in sentence structure. 	<p>LENGTH</p> <p>1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient <p>0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient
<p>0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response is incorrect. • Response contains insufficient evidence to show understanding of the material. • Response is off-topic and/or contains irrelevant content. 	<p>0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response contains no evidence of transitions and strategic repetition. • Response reflects no organization. • Response contains little to no evidence of sentence structure. 	

Evaluated by: **Self** **Peer** **Teacher** **(Circle One)**

Comments:

SCORING
13-14 = Advanced
11-12 = Proficient
8-10 = Needs Improvement
0-7 = Failing

_____ **Total Score**