**Combined Prompts for the “Diagnostic” Essays**

**—Be sure you get the one that matches your diagnostic**

Fall 2015 English 1A **Diagnostic: On Optimism and Youth**

After having read Nicholas Kristof’s “A Millennial Named Bush,” you should have some thoughts about the role of optimism and the Millennial generation’s impulse toward repairing the world. Below is another comment on that theme. **Drawing from your own experiences and observations**, **write a response** to either Nicholas Kristof’s essay, OR to the excerpt below from “Generation Q,” OR from both. **You MUST include at least one reference to one or the other essay, along with your own experiences/observations.**

* Develop and support your own ideas with examples, stories; use compare/contrast, whatever you think would be effective. **Basically, you are writing the same kind response as these newspaper columns get from the public when they’re posted online, just longer.**
* Aim for at *LEAST* 4 pages (4 sides of a standard-sized sheet of paper), SKIPPING LINES. If your handwriting is larger or smaller than average size, adjust your aims accordingly. More is better, usually.
* AUDIENCE: Write for your 1A classmates and teacher, thus minimize your summary of the readings—they’ve read them too.

**USE PEN! PLEASE BE AS LEGIBLE AS YOU CAN.**

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| **Context:** This is from “Generation Q,” by Thomas Friedman, an op-ed piece in the *NY Times* published Oct 2007 (also a presidential campaign year)  I just spent the past week visiting several colleges [. . .] and I can report that the more I am around this generation of college students, the more I am both baffled and impressed. I am impressed because they are so much more optimistic and idealistic than they should be. I am baffled because they are so much less radical and politically engaged than they need to be.  [. . . .] college students today are not only going abroad to study in record numbers, but they are also going abroad to build homes for the poor in El Salvador in record numbers or volunteering at AIDS clinics in record numbers. Not only has terrorism not deterred them from traveling, they are rolling up their sleeves and diving in deeper than ever. [. . . .] Many of those not going abroad have channeled their national service impulses into increasingly popular programs at home like “Teach for America,” which has become to this generation what the Peace Corps was to mine.  It’s for all these reasons that I’ve been calling them “Generation Q” — the Quiet Americans, in the best sense of that term, quietly pursuing their idealism, at home and abroad. But Generation Q may be too quiet, too online, for its own good, and for the country’s own good. When I think of the huge budget deficit, Social Security deficit and ecological deficit that our generation is leaving this generation, if they are not spitting mad, well, then they’re just not paying attention.  Generation Q would be doing itself a favor, and America a favor, if it demanded from every candidate who comes on campus answers to three questions: What is your plan for mitigating climate change? What is your plan for reforming Social Security? What is your plan for dealing with the deficit — so we all won’t be working for China in 20 years?  America needs a jolt of the idealism, activism and outrage (it must be in there) of Generation Q. That’s what twentysomethings are for — to light a fire under the country. But they can’t e-mail it in, and an online petition or a mouse click for carbon neutrality won’t cut it. They have to get organized in a way that will force politicians to pay attention rather than just patronize them. |

Fall 2015 English 1A  **Diagnostic: On Youthful Optimism and Global Engagement**

After having read Nicholas Kristof’s “A Millennial Named Bush,” you should have some thoughts about the Millennial generation’s impulse toward repairing the world. Below is another comment on that theme: a profile on a SJSU student whose study abroad adventure led her to starting a “world-bettering” business. **Drawing from your own experiences and observations**, **write a response** to either Nicholas Kristof’s essay, OR to the excerpt below from “Pillows for Peace,” OR from both. **You MUST include at least one reference to one or the other essay, along with your own experiences/observations.**

* Develop and support your own ideas with examples, stories; use compare/contrast, whatever you think would be effective. **Basically, you are writing the same kind response as these newspaper columns get from the public when they’re posted online, just longer.**
* Aim for at *LEAST* 4 pages (4 sides of a standard-sized sheet of paper), SKIPPING LINES. If your handwriting is larger or smaller than average size, adjust your aims accordingly. More is better, usually.
* AUDIENCE: Write for your 1A classmates and teacher, thus minimize your summary of the readings—they’ve read them too.

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| **Context**: The excerpt below is from a newspaper story by Bruce Newman called **“Business Major Launches Socially Conscious Startup”** from the *San Jose Mercury* in March 5, 2012  Aimi Duong is 24, so the fate of the world is naturally a matter of some concern to her. Not surprisingly, she believes there may still be some hope for it, although urgent action may be required. That’s where she comes in.  Duong was well into her studies as a business major at San Jose State when she realized that the primary objective taught by virtually every business class she took — maximize profits, destroy the competition — posed a conflict for someone determined to save the world.  [. . . .] Aimi Duong had no particular sense of direction in high school [. . .]. But after a year as a business major at **SJSU**, she had grown disillusioned with the engine that drives most businesses: the emphasis on the bottom line. “I chose business because I thought it would be more practical,” says Duong, “but when I began taking classes, I didn’t like the idea of everything being so profit-driven.”  To set herself apart from thousands of other soon-to-graduate job candidates, she hit upon the idea of studying abroad for four months. “It was scary just to drop everything, not have an income anymore and go somewhere where I don’t speak the language,” she says. “But when I got there, I saw how easy it was to travel around to other countries. [. . . .] Her Southeast Asian sojourn eventually stretched to 16 months.  During her last semester in Thailand, as she was applying for jobs back in the U.S., Duong dreaded the idea of heading for some entry-level position in the corporate world. “I felt I was kind of selling myself short,” she recalls. While interning for a nonprofit in Thailand, her fascination with the handmade textiles she loved to buy at local markets in Burma, Malaysia and Laos became the inspiration for the company she wanted to form.  When she met those women last year, Duong recognized something about their stories that touched her in a very familiar way.  Her mother and three siblings escaped from Vietnam as boat people in the early 1980s, then spent 11 months in a Malaysian refugee camp before making their way to San Jose. To keep the family together in a small apartment, Duong’s mom worked an assortment of odd jobs, always hoping her children would have a better life in this country. So when Duong first raised the possibility of an extended tour of Southeast Asia, her mother made no secret of her dismay.  But by that time, Duong had nearly depleted her savings. “My family was saying, ‘You just need to come home and come back to reality,’ ” she says.  “I’m the last child in my family, and my mom is quite dependent on me for her happiness,” Duong says. “So I never even thought of going to college far from San Jose because I always felt a really big sense of guilt. But I recognized that I can’t help anyone else if I can’t help myself.”  Instead, she found a website called [StartSomeGood.com](http://startsomegood.com/), where she posted her idea and a short video asking for support, hoping to raise seed money. “I figured it doesn’t hurt to try,” she says. To her surprise, in 45 days she raised $5,600, some of which she used to go to Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and other parts of Thailand to meet the women — most of them from Chiang Mai, Thailand — who would become her pillow manufacturers. Most of the weavers subsist on less than $200 a month. Duong hopes to change that. [. . .]  As soon as Duong returned to classes in San Jose two months ago, she began assembling a team of like-minded young women as partners, and opened her website for business. Everything is certified fair trade, and the weavers keep about 60 percent of what Duong pays for the pillows.  Her goal now is to begin working with women from a small village in northern Vietnam who are victims of human trafficking. Ramping up a distribution network from such a remote location is daunting. But with the fate of the world in the balance, her work won’t wait.  [Note: I’ve tweaked the organization a bit to keep it coherent despite my cuts, but the opening and closing are the same as in the original.] |
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