

Directed Self Placement Essay Prompt, 2012

Write a 4-5 page, double-spaced essay (1000-1200 words) in which you both summarize and analyze [Jonah Lehrer's article "Groupthink."](#) Present your analysis as a persuasive essay, using evidence from the article to support your claims about the information and ideas that Lehrer lays out.

Here are some questions to help guide your initial reading and thinking:

- o What do you take to be Lehrer's main point in the article?
- o As you were reading the article, what did you find most interesting or confusing or surprising? Why? You may wish to begin your analysis by looking carefully at one of these moments and how it relates to Lehrer's main point.
- o Then, develop a claim or argument about this aspect of Lehrer's article. Support your claim using specific quotes and examples from the text.

The primary audience for this essay will be your first University of Michigan writing instructor, and this person will be interested in your ability to develop a clear position and to support that position using specific evidence. Therefore, we suggest that you keep the following guidelines in mind.

- o **Focus:** Your essay should be developed around a clear central thesis or argument, drawing on evidence from the article to illustrate or support your argument.
- o **Structure:** Your essay should be clearly organized in a way that elaborates on and supports the essay's central thesis. Individual paragraphs should be cohesive, and your reader should be able to follow the logical progression of the ideas from one paragraph to the next.
- o **Evidence/Analysis:** Make sure that you support your claims with well-chosen examples from the article and that you explain clearly how each examples support your points.

Notes on reading the article:

While reading, you may encounter **unfamiliar terms or phrases**, such as "librettist," "hi-fi," "tweeters," and "Q." "Q" is defined in the article, but some of the other terms are not. You may also encounter terms that are familiar but used in unusual ways (e.g. the term "incubator" as it appears in the article). Whenever you encounter terms such as these, we recommend that you consult a dictionary or an online search engine. **Researching** the meaning of these terms may deepen your understanding of the article's content. Try to determine which of the unfamiliar terms are most crucial to understanding the article. Paying attention to the context, or the words and ideas around a confusing word or phrase, can also help you make sense of an unfamiliar idea. You may also find it helpful to scan the article for **statements about the key concept** you want to focus on—such as collaboration or dissent—and underline (or highlight) these. Doing so may help you consider your options and select the statement(s) to which you will respond in your essay. Strategies like these can be helpful for the kinds of reading you will do in college. Remember, you may take as much time as you need to do the reading.

Lehrer, Jonah. "Groupthink." *The New Yorker*. 30 January, 2012.