

# UNIVERSITY INTERSCHOLASTIC LEAGUE READY WRITING CONTEST

## HIGH SCHOOL TOPICS

Regional • 2018

Read both of the following statements carefully; then write an expository essay on a topic clearly related to one or the other of the two statements. **Provide your own title.** You are not expected to write on both topics.

Contestants who are hand-writing their compositions must use their own standard 8 1/2 x 11-inch ruled white notebook paper or typing paper or the paper provided by the host school. Contestants shall write or print the composition **in ink and on only one side of the paper.** If contestants choose to use their own laptop computers, they must bring portable printers and associated hardware, software and paper. The typed entry must be single-sided and double-spaced, using any standard 12-point font on 8 1/2 x 11-inch white paper. When printing the contest on an electronic printer, the print command must be started by the time contest time expires. Students who opt to compose their entries on computers accept the risk of computer malfunction. In case of computer malfunction, the contestant may use the remaining allotted time to complete the composition in handwriting or compose on another computer (if available).

*Ready Writing prompts are provided as springboards for thought, not to advocate particular points of view. Contestants should not conclude that quotations or statements used in prompts reflect the opinion of the UIL.*

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### Topic I

“I have a foreboding of an America in my children’s or grandchildren’s time – when the United States is a service and information economy; when nearly all the key manufacturing industries have slipped away to other countries; when awesome technological powers are in the hands of a very few, and no one representing the public interest can even grasp the issues; when the people have lost the ability to set their own agendas or knowledgeably question those in authority; when, clutching our crystals and nervously consulting our horoscopes, our critical faculties in decline, unable to distinguish between what feels good and what’s true, we slide, almost without noticing, back into superstition and darkness. The dumbing down of America is most evident in the slow decay of substantive content in the enormously influential media, the 30-second sound bites (now down to 10 seconds or less), lowest common denominator programming, credulous presentations on pseudoscience and superstition, but especially a kind of celebration of ignorance.”

--Carl Sagan (1934-1996), American Astronomer and Author, *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark*, 1995.

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## Topic II

“A healthy and ideal system of education would be where a teacher would patiently impart knowledge, instead of curriculum, upon the students, only after assessing their acceptability – where a student would acquire knowledge in order to learn, not to earn – where the parents would be willing to make necessary sacrifices in order to adorn their child with curiosity and thereafter nourish that curiosity, regardless of how absurdly impractical it becomes to the eyes of the society.”

--Abhijit Naskar (b. 1991), Indian  
Neuroscientist and Author, *The Education  
Decree*, 2017.