

# UNIVERSITY INTERSCHOLASTIC LEAGUE

## READY WRITING CONTEST

### HIGH SCHOOL TOPICS

State • 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

The United States was founded on hate—the hatred that justified colonial annihilation of American Indians and that perpetuated the enslavement of Africans. Hate divided the country during the Civil War, and a century later, spawned protest movements, with activists vying over issues of justice and human rights. And Americans are not alone in this legacy. Obviously, our globe’s history of colonial conquest and brutality, and the many current hot spots of extreme violence and displacement, reflect deep currents of hate. It would be naïve to argue we’re in the most hateful moment in history. The hate that’s brewing now is harmful, frightening, and increasingly acute. It doesn’t have to be the worst moment in history for it to be bad enough to warrant a concerted effort at reckoning—and change.

The bad news is we all hate. All of us. That includes me—and I’m afraid it also includes you. We first have to face the hard truth. In different ways and to different degrees, consciously or unconsciously, all of us, in one way or another, sometimes treat other individuals and entire groups of human beings as though they are fundamentally less deserving than we are. We’ve gotten to the point where hate is such an acceptable norm that we not only believe it’s inevitable but we try to overtly market its benefits—and exploit it for profit. There’s now a dating app called Hester, which will match you with a potential love interest based on the things or people you mutually hate. Really. Meanwhile, much of the media relies on making animosity not only palpable but virtually addictive. More and more of us get our news primarily, if not exclusively, from television channels and websites that cater to our hate and present information in ways that reinforce our biases. This not only exploits hate but exacerbates it. Across all media, ratings aren’t going up because viewers are getting more informed but because they’re getting more inflamed. I know I get more clicks and claps every time I roll my eyes on air,

whether or not I mean to or not, and whether you think that's the meanest thing in the world or not. I'm not going to argue about which side or group does it worse. We all hate. And we all do it too much. So what do we do now?

We think we're good people, but we don't see how that sphere of moral concern is constricted by hate, by the history and habits and culture of who matters and who doesn't in our society, which we have all bought into, whether we mean to or not. So we shake our heads about excessive corporate greed and we shake our fists against neo-Nazis marching in the streets, but not enough of us admit that they're reflections of the society we've all created, let alone acknowledge that they're reflections of ourselves.

We have a crisis of hate in the United States and around the world, and we can't begin to address it if we don't first learn to see it—making the invisible visible—uncovering the inadvertent, implicit, deliberate, and the conscious forms of hate all around us *and in ourselves*. “Real change is systemic and self-implicating, urging us to see our role in vast, complex problems,” writer Anand Giridharadas said in a speech in 2017. Leo Tolstoy wrote, “Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself.” We have to do both. Before it's too late.

--Sally Kohn (1977), American Political Commentator,  
*The Opposite of Hate: A Field Guide to Repairing Our  
Humanity*, 2018.

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## Topic II

There is a time in every man's education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance; that imitation is suicide; that he must take himself for better for worse as his portion; that though the wide universe is full of good, no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil bestowed on the plot of ground which is given him to till. The power which resides in him is new in nature, and none but he knows what that is which he can do, nor does he know until he has tried. Not for nothing one face, one character, one fact, makes much impression on him, and another none. It is not without pre-established harmony, this sculpture in the memory. The eye was placed where one ray should fall, that it might testify of that particular ray. Bravely let him speak the utmost syllable of his confession. We but half express ourselves, and are ashamed of that divine idea which each of us represents. It may be safely trusted as proportionate and of good issues, so it be faithfully imparted, but God will not have his work made manifest by cowards. It needs a divine man to exhibit anything divine. A man is relieved and gay when he has put his heart into his work and done his best; but what he has said or done otherwise shall give him no peace. It is a deliverance which does not deliver. In the attempt his genius deserts him; no muse befriends; no invention, no hope.

Man is timid and apologetic; he is no longer upright; he dare not say 'I think,' 'I am,' but quotes some saint or sage. He is ashamed before the blade of grass or the blowing rose. These roses under my window make no reference to former roses or to better ones; they are for what they are; they exist with God today. There is no time to them. There is simply the rose; it is perfect in every moment of its existence. Before a leaf-bud has burst, its whole life acts: in the full-blown flower there is no more; in the leafless root there is no less. Its nature is satisfied and it satisfies nature in all moments alike. There is no time to it. But man postpones or remembers; he does not live in the present, but with reverted eye laments the past, or, heedless of the riches

that surround him, stands on tiptoe to foresee the future. He cannot be happy and strong until he too lives with nature in the present, above time.

I hope in these days we have heard the last of conformity and consistency. Let the words be gazette and ridiculous henceforward. Instead of the gong for dinner, let us hear a whistle from the Spartan fife. Let us bow and apologize never more. A great man is coming to eat at my house. I do not wish to please him; I wish that he should wish to please me. I will stand here for humanity, and though I would make it kind, I would make it true. Let us affront and reprimand the smooth mediocrity and squalid contentment of the times, and hurl in the face of custom and trade and office, the fact which is the upshot of all history, that there is a great responsible Thinker and Actor moving wherever moves a man; that a true man belongs to no other time or place, but is the center of things. Where he is, there is nature. He measures you and all men and all events. You are constrained to accept his standard. Ordinarily, every body in society reminds us of somewhat else, or of some other person. Character, reality, reminds you of nothing else; it takes place of the whole creation. The man must be so much that he must make all circumstances indifferent — put all means into the shade. This all great men are and do. Every true man is a cause, a country, and an age; requires infinite spaces and numbers and time fully to accomplish his thought; — and posterity seem to follow his steps as a procession.

--Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), American Essayist and Philosopher, *Self-Reliance*, 1841.