

## College & Career Composition

The following passage, excerpted from an article titled “Followers Flex Their Muscles,” challenges the idea that leaders are more important than followers in our society. Read the passage, paying close attention to the author’s claims that followers play a more important role.

Why do we obsess about leadership and spurn followership? Hard-wiring is the easy explanation. Like other animals, humans organize themselves hierarchically, focusing on those at the top as opposed to those at the bottom. But we dwell on leaders and ignore followers for other reasons as well. Recent changes in culture and technology further skew our attention toward those with power and influence and away from those without. As a result, the so-called leadership industry is booming.

Leader-centrism, though, is not only misguided, it is mistaken. Followers have always mattered more than we generally believe. And as the arc of history testifies, they matter more now than ever. Think, for example, of the American and the French revolutions, the 19th-century rallying cry “Workers of the World Unite,” and the 20th-century civil rights and women’s movements. Each of these watershed moments was about one thing: the redistribution of power from those higher up to those lower down.

This trend shows no sign of slowing down. As a consequence of the same recent changes in culture and technology, followers have become more powerful than ever, and leaders less. Increased follow-power is not only about toppling ineffective leaders but also about circumventing them—about how ordinary people are simply taking matters into their own hands. Most of the recent sociopolitical movements fall into this category, as do the countless single-issue initiatives that are the 21st-century consequence of disappointments and dissatisfactions that spring to life with the mere stroke of a computer key.

The ability to drive change emanates not from single individuals but from people without power, authority, or influence who harness their collective passions in the interest of their collective causes. Organizations like Greenpeace and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), both once deemed radical, turned out to spearhead mass movements. And people previously considered powerless have been heard from in newly powerful ways. Gays and lesbians are staking their claims to legitimacy and equity in growing numbers. And demands now made by or on behalf of people who are mentally or physically impaired far transcend those made only a couple of decades ago.

The point is that those of lower rank matter. They matter even when they do little or nothing—for the effect of doing little or nothing is to support the status quo. The temper of the times, then, is determined not by leaders, “best” or otherwise. It is determined, as well, by followers who simply support the status quo or who at least try to create change.

Adapted from Barbara Kellerman, “Followers Flex Their Muscles.” © 2007 by *U.S. News and World Report*.

Write a persuasive essay in which you argue whether or not you believe followers are more important than leaders. You are encouraged to use the author’s ideas in addition to your own to explain and support your position.

**Purpose: To Persuade**

	<b>Viewpoint</b>	<b>Development</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Language</b>
<b>Score: 6</b> Essays at this score point demonstrate effective skill in writing to persuade.	The essay takes a clear position in response to the reading passage, demonstrates insightful understanding of the passage, and addresses the significance of the ideas and/or values reflected in the passage.	The essay effectively supports the writer's position with ample convincing evidence drawn from the reading passage and/or the writer's own knowledge and experience. Ideas are thoroughly explained. The essay maintains a clear and consistent focus on critical ideas.	Organization is unified and coherent, with a logical progression of ideas and effective transitions that clarify relationships among ideas. The essay includes a clear, engaging introduction and an effective conclusion that may extend or elaborate ideas.	A variety of well-constructed sentences and precise word choice clearly and effectively convey ideas. The writer's voice and tone are appropriate for the persuasive purpose and are maintained throughout the essay. Although there may be a few minor errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics, meaning is clear throughout the essay.
<b>Score: 5</b> Essays at this score point demonstrate competent skill in writing to persuade.	The essay takes a clear position in response to the reading passage, demonstrates clear understanding of the passage, and partially addresses the significance of the ideas and/or values reflected in the passage.	The essay competently supports the writer's position with sufficient relevant evidence drawn from the reading passage and/or the writer's own knowledge and experience. Ideas are clearly explained. The essay maintains focus on critical ideas.	Organization is coherent, with some logical progression of ideas and clear transitions that clarify relationships among ideas. The essay includes a clear, well-developed introduction and a developed conclusion.	Varied sentence construction and some precise word choice clearly convey ideas. The writer's voice and tone are appropriate for the persuasive purpose and are maintained throughout most of the essay. There may be a few errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics, but they are rarely distracting and meaning is clear.
<b>Score: 4</b> Essays at this score point demonstrate adequate skill in writing to persuade.	The essay takes a clear position in response to the reading passage, demonstrates satisfactory understanding of the passage, and establishes the significance of the ideas and/or values reflected in the passage.	The essay adequately supports the writer's position with some relevant evidence drawn from the reading passage and/or the writer's own knowledge and experience. Ideas are adequately explained. The essay maintains focus on ideas appropriate to the task.	Organization is apparent, with ideas logically grouped and some transitions that clarify relationships among ideas. The essay includes a clear, somewhat developed introduction and conclusion.	Sentences and word choice are usually clear and adequately convey ideas. The writer's voice and tone are appropriate for the persuasive purpose, though they may not be consistently maintained. There may be some distracting errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics, but meaning is usually clear.
<b>Score: 3</b> Essays at this score point demonstrate some developing skill in writing to persuade.	The essay takes a position in response to the reading passage and demonstrates basic understanding of the passage, but offers little recognition of the significance of the ideas and/or values reflected in the passage.	The essay somewhat supports the writer's position with a little relevant evidence drawn from the reading passage and/or the writer's own knowledge and experience. Ideas are only somewhat explained. The essay usually focuses on ideas appropriate to the task.	Organization is simple, with most ideas logically grouped. A few transitions are used to clarify relationships among ideas. The essay includes an underdeveloped introduction and a brief conclusion.	Most sentences convey ideas clearly, and word choice is general. The writer's voice and tone are somewhat appropriate for the persuasive purpose, but they are inconsistently maintained. Errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics may be distracting and may occasionally impede understanding.
<b>Score: 2</b> Essays at this score point demonstrate inconsistent or weak skill in writing to persuade.	The essay takes a position, though the writer's position is not entirely relevant to the reading passage and only limited understanding of the passage is demonstrated. There is little or no recognition of the significance of the ideas and/or values reflected in the passage.	The essay minimally supports the writer's position with weak or irrelevant evidence drawn from the reading passage and/or the writer's own knowledge and experience. Explanations are unclear or incomplete. The essay only sometimes focuses on ideas appropriate to the task.	Organization is simple, with some ideas logically grouped and a few transitions used. The essay has a brief introduction and may have a brief conclusion.	Some sentences convey ideas clearly, and word choice is basic. Voice and tone are inconsistent and may not be appropriate for the persuasive purpose. Errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics may frequently be distracting and may sometimes impede understanding.
<b>Score: 1</b> Essays at this score point demonstrate little or no skill in writing to persuade.	The essay may not take a position; if it does, the writer's position is not clearly relevant to the reading passage. No accurate understanding of the passage is demonstrated. There is no recognition of the significance of the ideas and/or values reflected in the passage.	The essay provides minimal support for any claims and may not provide any evidence drawn from the reading passage or the writer's own knowledge or experience. The essay lacks explanation of ideas and focuses very little on ideas appropriate to the task.	Organization of ideas is not clear, with little or no evidence of the logical grouping of ideas. The essay has a very brief introduction but may have no conclusion.	A few sentences and some word choices convey ideas clearly. Voice and tone are not appropriate for the persuasive purpose. Errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics may frequently be distracting and may significantly impede understanding.
<b>Score: 0</b>	Unscorable: essay is blank, off-topic, illegible, or written in another language.			

Total: 24 points