

# 2017-2018

## 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

### Pre-Writing Assessment

#### Reading

**Read the passage below about civilian space travel. As you read the passage, think about the advantages and disadvantages of civilian space travel. Then use the passage to help you write a well-organized multi-paragraph opinion essay.**

#### Civilians in Space

Many people have looked to the stars and wondered what it would be like to take a trip into outer space. Ever since the space program began, traveling beyond Earth has been a privilege for a select few, namely, astronauts. The rest of us have had to imagine what it would be like, but that may soon change.

Those who favor expanding space exploration feel that it is time to go beyond the government-funded National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) program and to create opportunities for individuals and businesses to explore outer space. Imagine privately financed research outposts in space, missions to Mars, and mining operations on the Moon. The space frontier could indeed be the next gold rush!

Imagine what it would be like to travel in space. Those who have been lucky enough to visit space have all called it an amazing experience. The view of Earth and the stars must be spectacular, and the experience of living in “zero gravity” would be fascinating. The first American woman to visit space, Sally Ride, said that it was the greatest fun of her life. Imagine the thrill of booking a flight for a weekend stay (or longer) at a space hotel. It turns out that a space hotel would be much easier to design and build than the International Space Station; early estimates of the cost to build the hotels indicate that they would be less expensive if the orbiting hotels were built to accommodate large numbers of space travelers.

The space hotel and the other projects businesses might think up would allow people to see what is happening in space with their own eyes. That may lead to more support of NASA and its space research and greater appreciation of the funding that the space program now receives.

Those who oppose expanding space exploration argue that the costs are overwhelming and unrealistic. They point to the billions of dollars that would have to be raised through consumers or corporate sponsorship. In addition, civilian space travel is potentially dangerous, and there are many unknown risks involved. Who would determine the safety of commercial orbiting vehicles, and how would they be insured? Issues like this require time for discussion among groups from many different businesses. Companies that specialize in manufacturing, travel, marketing, insurance, law, and finance would all have to be involved.

Others believe there are simply too many unanswered questions to put civilians in space any time soon. There are also those who question investing in space exploration when there are widespread problems like poverty and disease that need to be addressed on Earth. For these people, commercial space travel will remain science fiction, at least for many years to come.

**Write a multi-paragraph essay that states your opinion about whether you are for or against civilian space travel. Consider this question: Which argument seemed more effective about civilian space travel? Use details from the passage as evidence to convince your teacher.**

**As you write, follow the suggestions below:**

- **Be sure your essay has an introduction, body, and conclusion.**
- **Use details from the passage as evidence to support your opinion.**
- **Write clearly and check for spelling, punctuation, and grammar.**

## Rubric – Opinion Essay

	Ideas and Evidence	Organization	Language	Subtotal
ADVANCED 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The introduction skillfully pulls the reader in, the writer clearly states an opinion</li> <li>Logical reasons and relevant evidence convincingly support the opinion</li> <li>The concluding section capably summarizes the opinion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The reasons and evidence are organized logically and consistently to persuasive effect</li> <li>Transitions successfully clarify the relationships between the opinion and reasons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The writing maintains a formal style</li> <li>Sentence beginnings, lengths, and structures vary and have a rhythmic flow</li> <li>Grammar and usage are correct</li> </ul>	
COMPETENT 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The introduction could do more to grab reader's attention, the writer states an opinion</li> <li>Most reasons and evidence support the writer's opinion, but they could be more convincing</li> <li>The concluding section restates the opinion and leaves a lasting impression</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The organization of reasons and evidence is confusing in a few places</li> <li>A few more transitions are needed to connect the reasons to the opinion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The style is informal in a few places</li> <li>Sentence beginnings, lengths, and structures vary somewhat</li> <li>Some grammatical and usage errors are repeated in the essay</li> </ul>	
LIMITED 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The introduction is incomplete; the writer identifies a topic, but the opinion is not clearly stated</li> <li>The reasons and evidence are not always logical or relevant</li> <li>The concluding section includes an incomplete summary of the opinion and does not leave a lasting impression</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The organization of reasons and evidence is logical in some place, but it often doesn't follow a pattern</li> <li>Transitions are not adequately used to connect the reasons to the opinion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The style becomes informal in many places</li> <li>Sentence structures barely vary, and some fragments or run-on sentences are present</li> <li>Several spelling and capitalization mistakes occur, and punctuation is inconsistent</li> <li>Grammar and usage are incorrect in many places</li> </ul>	
EMERGING 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The introduction is confusing</li> <li>Supporting reasons and evidence are missing</li> <li>The concluding section is missing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A logical organization is not used; reasons and evidence are presented randomly</li> <li>Transitions are not used, making the essay difficult to understand</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The style is inappropriate for the essay</li> <li>Repetitive sentence structure, fragments, run-on sentences make the writing hard to follow</li> <li>Spelling and capitalization are often incorrect, and punctuation is missing in most places</li> <li>Most grammatical and usage errors change the meaning of ideas</li> </ul>	
			<b>Total Score</b>	