Fall 2017 Helena District Writing Assessment, 9-12

“Motivation” Prompt

Sample Score Point 6

Joey works hard. He is a senior, struggling to get to graduation day in June. He wants to go to a good college, get good grades, and have a good life, but he cannot seem to find the will to get his work turned in to the teacher. Joey is only one of thousands of kids across America who can only force themselves to do work because they understand the rewards of going to college to improve their lives. Despite intrinsic motivation being more powerful than outside influences, society should continue to use extrinsic motivation to encourage individuals to be their best selves and work towards their goals.

It is undeniable that intrinsic motivation is a driving force within people to achieve their dreams. People naturally want to help others to better their society. People demonstrate this natural compassion through volunteer work, charity, and even lending the lawnmower to the neighbor. These actions stem from the desire to feel good because one helped another; people are not seeking praise from anyone else even if that is a happy consequence. Besides aid for the less fortunate, intrinsic motivation also fuels the drive in people to work harder to help themselves. Every person wants to have a better life. For some people that means more money, for others it means travelling the world, but everyone desires something, and this desire empowers individuals to work for what they want. Subsequently, after achieving a goal, one feels elation at reaching that goal thus reinforcing the power of intrinsic motivation. As Shia Lebouf once said, “don’t let your dreams just be dreams. Just. Do. It!” and the rewards will outweigh the work.

Despite intrinsic motivation being a self-perpetuating loop, external incentives are still crucial to society. Humans are social beings, needing others to live and thrive, but should one commit a crime, he will be ousted from the group, forced to live on his own or die. Today, it may not be quite that dire, but everyone knows how it feels when everyone around her is angry. She feels left out and hurt, even if climbing the social ladder was the goal. This example demonstrates that while intrinsic motivation is more powerful than extrinsic motivation, it does not always yield desirable results that society will reward. Extrinsic motivators encourage people to behave in a way that will benefit the group, instead of simply one individual taking what they want and hurting the group. These social extrinsic motivators are as useful as intrinsic motivators, because they keep society running smoothly, with fewer hiccups because of individual gain and betrayal.

Even more significantly, extrinsic motivators are important in society because they are what fosters intrinsic motivation. When people think of intrinsic motivation, they often imagine people working hard to have their dream career or their perfect life, but while individuals are internally motivated to do these things, they would not be able to without the rewards granted by society. Imagine that society abandons all extrinsic motivation. People would not work for a better career, and why should they? They would not get paid more than before because that would be an outside incentive to do more work. Would people give to the poor? No, and they should not because they would get nothing in return, but would be less productive when it came to their own lives. Thomas Hobbes believed that men naturally exist as beings that want only to help themselves, and society’s incentives keep people in line, and we see evidence of this during disasters. During Hurricane Harvey, people looted, because there was no reason not to. Without motivation from society, people will beat others down to win, even if they would have been better off together.

In short, extrinsic motivation is necessary in society to help people work together for the good of all people. Without extrinsic motivation to provide a guiding hand to what people should be intrinsically motivated to do, everything in society would erupt to chaos and anarchy as every man, woman, and child took everything they could to live their best life and survive; without extrinsic motivation, we would live in Thomas Hobbes’ state of nature.

Annotation: This essay is characterized by clear focus and statement of claim, as well as good support providing well-developed examples and explanation. Implications and complexities of the argument are examined; ideas are presented in a organized manner balanced by transitions. Word choice is skillful and precise; sentence structures are clear and varied.