**Argumentative Writing Prompt Number One - 2017**

**The issue of energy independence is one that many Americans have grown to see as the essential political, social, and economic issue of our time. Since the 1970’s, the State of Connecticut has led the way for the rest of America in seeking a balanced energy policy. Recently, the state assembly has looked into plans for helping rid the state of its dependence on oil. Many companies have come up with plans to assist the state in achieving its goals of energy independence. One company, United Illuminating, has presented plans to build a new nuclear power station in Haddam. For the residence of Connecticut and scholars on both sides of the green technology revolution, the building of nuclear plants like the one currently being purposed is a topic of very heated debate and prognostication.**

**The state assembly of Connecticut will be meeting to debate the issue of building the nuclear power plant in the next few weeks. A definitive answer to this debate for the state of Connecticut would sway national opinion and potentially alter the creation of nuclear power plants in several states over the next decade. Your local state representatives, Philip Miller, Jesse MacLachlan, and local senators Ted Kennedy, Jr. and Art Linares would like your input into how they should vote on the matter. As part of your initial research, you have found the following sources about nuclear power.**

**PART ONE: The Sources**

You will now examine several sources. You can re-examine any of the sources as often as you would like. After looking at the sources, use the rest of the time in PART ONE to answer the questions about them. Your answers to these questions will be scored. Also, your answers will help you think about the information you have read and looked at, which should help you write your argumentative essay. Feel free to highlight the sources or take any notes down that you want.

**Source One**: **“Nuclear Energy Pros and Cons”**

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Below you will find a nuclear energy pros and cons list, which covers the most important aspects of typical nuclear power plants. There are 104 commercial nuclear power plants in the United States producing a whopping 806.2 TWh of electricity, in other words about 20 % of the entire electricity generation (2008). There is no doubt that the potential of nuclear energy is huge, but there are also downsides. Before we get further into the pros and cons list, what exactly is nuclear energy? The basic gist is this: By separating an atom into two lighter atoms, there is a net loss of mass. This mass is not exactly lost, but rather transformed into massive amounts of energy. This is what is referred to as nuclear fission. By controlling these reactions we can harness the energy.

Advantages of Nuclear Energy

1. Relatively Low Costs

The initial construction costs of nuclear power plants are large. On top of this, when the power plants first have been built, we are left with the costs to enrich and process the nuclear fuel (e.g. uranium), control and get rid of nuclear waste, as well as the maintenance of the plant.  The reason this is under advantages is that nuclear energy is cost-competitive. Generating electricity in nuclear reactors is cheaper than electricity generating from oil, gas and coal, not to speak of the renewable energy sources!

1. Provides Base Load Energy\*/ Provides high-density energy

Nuclear power plants provide a stable base load of energy. This can work synergistic with renewable energy sources such as wind and solar. The electricity production from the plants can be lowered when good wind and solar resources are available and cranked up when the demand is high.

*(\*Base load = on a power grid the minimum level of demand on an electrical grid over a span of time. The minimum amount of power needed to reasonably meet customer requirements.)*

1. Low Pollution/ Emission free power

It is in most cases more beneficial, in terms of the climate crisis, to replace other energy harnessing methods we use today with nuclear power. The environmental effects of nuclear power are relatively light compared to those.

1. Thorium

Reports show that with the yearly fuel consumption of today’s nuclear power plants, we have enough uranium for 80 years. It is possible to fuel nuclear power plants with other fuel types than uranium. Thorium, which also is a greener alternative, has lately been given an increased amount of attention. China, Russia and India have already plans to start using thorium to fuel their reactors in the near future. It looks like nuclear fuel is of good availability if we combine the reserves of the different types together. In other words, hopefully enough time for us to find cost-competitive greener ways of harnessing energy.

1. Sustainable?

Is nuclear energy renewable or non-renewable? This is a good question. By definition, nuclear energy is not a renewable energy source. As I mentioned above, there is a limited amount of fuel for nuclear power available. On the other hand, you could argue that nuclear energy is potentially sustainable by the use of breeder reactors and fusion reactors. Nuclear fusion is the holy grail of harnessing energy. If we can learn to control atomic fusion, the same reactions as those that fuel the sun, we have practically unlimited energy. At the moment, these two methods both have serious challenges that need to be dealt with if we are to start using them on larger scale.

Disadvantages of Nuclear Energy

While the advantages of using nuclear energy seem to be many, there are also plenty of negative effects of nuclear energy. The following are the most important ones:

1. Accidents Happen

The radioactive waste can possess a threat to the environment and is dangerous for humans. We all remember the Chernobyl accident, where the harmful effects of nuclear radiation on humans can even be witnessed today. Estimates conclude that somewhere between 15,000 and 30,000 people lost their life’s in the Chernobyl aftermath and more than 2.5 million Ukrainians are still struggling with health problems related to nuclear waste. Not long ago, a major nuclear crisis happened again in Japan. While the casualties were not as high as with the Chernobyl accident, the environmental effects were disastrous. History shows that we can never really protect us 100% against these disasters. Accidents do happen. Benjamin K. Sovacool has reported that worldwide there have been 99 accidents at nuclear power plants.Fifty-seven accidents have occurred since the Chernobyl disaster, and 57% (56 out of 99) of all nuclear-related accidents have occurred in the USA

2. Radioactive Waste and the negative environmental impact

Does nuclear power cause air pollution? The nuclear power plants emit negligible amounts, if any, carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.  However, the processes in the nuclear fuel chain such as mining, enrichment and waste management does. The world's nuclear fleet creates about 10,000 metric tons of high-level spent nuclear fuel each year.

1. Nuclear power is not cost efficient

In the dawn of the nuclear era, cost was expected to be one of the technology's advantages, not one of its drawbacks. The first chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, Lewis Strauss, predicted in a 1954 speech that nuclear power would someday make electricity “too cheap to matter.” A half century later, we have learned that nuclear power is, instead, too expensive to finance.

The first generation of nuclear power plants proved so costly to build that half of them were abandoned during construction. Those that were completed saw huge cost overruns, which were passed on to utility customers in the form of rate increases. By 1985, Forbes had labeled U.S. nuclear power "the largest managerial disaster in business history.”

The industry has failed to prove that things will be different this time around: soaring, uncertain costs continue to plague nuclear power in the 21st century. Between 2002 and 2008, for example, cost estimates for new nuclear plant construction rose from between $2 billion and $4 billion per unit to $9 billion per unit, according to a 2009 UCS report, while experience with new construction in Europe has seen costs continue to soar.

1. Nuclear proliferation and concerns over terrorism

According to Mark Z. Jacobson, Professor at Stanford University, the growth of nuclear power has "historically increased the ability of nations to obtain or enrich uranium for nuclear weapons, and a large-scale worldwide increase in nuclear energy facilities would exacerbate this problem, putting the world at greater risk of a nuclear war or terrorism catastrophe".The historic link between energy facilities and weapons is evidenced by the secret development or attempted development of weapons capabilities in nuclear power facilities in Pakistan, India, Iraq (prior to 1981), Iran, and to some extent in North Korea.

**Source Two: Excerpts in favor of Nuclear Power**

The Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) stated the following in its article "Myths & Facts About Safety," available at www.nei.org (accessed Apr. 24, 2012):

"After more than a half-century of commercial nuclear energy production in the United States, including more than 3,500 reactor years of operation, there have been no radiation-related health effects linked to their operation. Studies by the National Cancer Institute, The United Nations Scientific Committee of the Effects of Atomic Radiation, the National Research Council’s BEIR VII study group and the National Council on Radiation Protection and Measurements all show that U.S. nuclear power plants effectively protect the public’s health and safety. Nuclear plants also are safe for workers. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, it is safer to work at a nuclear plant than at a fast food restaurant or a grocery store or in real estate...”

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Tony Pietrangelo, MBA, Chief Nuclear Officer and Senior Vice President of the Nuclear Energy Institute, stated the following in his Mar. 21, 2011 article "Nuclear Power in America: Five Reasons Why It's Safe and Reliable,” published in the *Christian Science Monitor*:

"Commercial nuclear power plants in the United States have produced electricity for over half a century, and there have been no radiation-related deaths linked to their operation. Studies by numerous health entities, including the National Cancer Institute and the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, show that US nuclear power plants effectively protect the public's health and safety.

The US Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) regulates the commercial and institutional uses of nuclear energy, including nuclear power plants. These plants are designed, licensed, constructed, and operated to rigorous requirements established by the NRC. Additionally, the NRC has a continuing inspection and oversight process with on-site resident inspectors and periodic inspection teams to ensure compliance with regulations and associated programs…While it will take some time to fully understand the events at the tsunami-stricken Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, we will evaluate the lessons from the events at Fukushima and apply them to make US nuclear plants even safer…As we increasingly emphasize a low-carbon economy, our need for clean electric generating capacity will grow. Nuclear energy fills this role.”

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The US Department of Energy (DOE) stated the following in its publication “Nuclear Energy: Answers to Questions,” published on www.ne.doe.gov (accessed Apr. 24, 2012):

"Nuclear energy to produce electricity commercially began in the U.S. in 1957. Since then, it has proven itself as one of our safest energy technologies. Safety is a major consideration throughout the design, construction, and operation of a nuclear power plant. Hundreds of systems monitor, control, and support the safe operation of the reactor at each power plant. These systems provide maximum safety and reliability and reduce the chance of an accidental release of radioactivity into the environment…

The nuclear industry has rigid safety standards, which the NRC [Nuclear Regulatory Commission] sets and regulates. Utilities operating nuclear power plants must prove to the NRC that each plant can meet these stringent safety standards. Periodic inspections also ensure that each facility operates safely. Utilities face severe financial penalties if NRC inspections show that the plant is not operating in full compliance with federal regulations…

Since 1957, utilities in the U.S. have operated commercial nuclear power plants. During this time, no one in the U.S. has died or been injured as a result of operations at a commercial nuclear power plant. Efforts to ensure that nuclear power plants maintain this safety record are constantly emphasized, and the record compares favorably with all other ways of making electricity.”

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“Climate change warriors: It’s time to go nuclear” by Thom Patterson, CNN

Four top environmental scientists raised the stakes Sunday in their fight to reverse climate change and save the planet. Climate and energy scientists James Hansen, Ken Caldeira, Kerry Emanuel and Tom Wigley have released an open letter calling on world leaders to support development of safer nuclear power systems. Embracing nuclear is the only way, the scientists believe, to reverse the looming threat of climate change which they blame on fossil fuels. The fear is that time is running out. Without nuclear, the scientists believe global energy consumption will overtake the planet's ability to reverse the buildup of carbon dioxide pollution from burning oil, coal and other fossil fuels. At risk, said Hansen, are disintegrating polar ice sheets and rising sea levels which will threaten coastal regions.

Nuclear power is burgeoning in some parts of the world and shrinking in others. Asia is embracing it -- except Japan -- which is still struggling to figure out how to safely deal with the dangerously radioactive Fukushima nuclear power plant. The Japanese disaster left Germany so unnerved that they've chosen to phase out their 17 nuclear facilities by 2022. The letter admits "today's nuclear plants are far from perfect." However, "... there is no credible path to climate stabilization that does not include a substantial role for nuclear power." A United Nations report released last month re-confirmed Hansen's fears. The study concluded that the planet is heating up, the oceans are rising and there's more evidence that neither development is natural.

**Source Three: Excerpts against the use of Nuclear Power**

Jeffrey Patterson, DO, Professor Emeritus of Family Medicine at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, stated the following in his Apr. 26, 2011 article "Radiation Exposure and the Power of Zero,” published in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*:

“The real issue is that the use of nuclear power and nuclear weapons is forcing humankind, and indeed the whole ecosystem, to participate in a particularly cruel and totally uncontrolled experiment. Given the scientific evidence that there is no safe dose of radiation, this is an experiment that has already gone awry…

The real question is whether we, as a human race, can afford in good conscience to risk annihilation with our continued reliance on nuclear technology. Can we continue to despoil our environment with long-lived radioactive materials that are scattered to the wind and embedded in our precious soil, randomly exposing large populations, and foisting health impacts on unsuspecting future generations who have no choice in this matter?

We may choose to do so. But if we do, I am quite sure that our children and grandchildren will roundly condemn us for our lack of foresight and our selfishness. As they struggle to deal with a poisonous environment and waste that must be safeguarded for thousands of years, they will certainly wonder what possessed us to do this.

We must choose to halt this process. To do this we need to… make a dramatic and rapid retreat from the use of nuclear power to generate electricity.”

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Ten former Nobel Peace Laureates, including the Dalai Lama, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and Rigoberta Menchú Tum, stated the following in an Apr. 21, 2011 letter to open letter to 31 heads of state whose countries are currently heavily invested in nuclear power production, or are considering investing in nuclear power, available at [www.nobelwomensinitiative.org](http://www.nobelwomensinitiative.org):

"On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in Ukraine - and more than two months after the massive earthquake and tsunami that devastated Japan... It is time to recognize that nuclear power is not a clean, safe or affordable source of energy.  
  
We are deeply disturbed that the lives of people in Japan are being endangered by nuclear radiation in the air, in the water and in the food as a result of the breakdown at the Fukushima nuclear plant. We firmly believe that if the world phases out its current use of nuclear power, future generations of people everywhere - and the Japanese people who have already suffered too much - will live in greater peace and security…

[R]adiation is not just a concern in a nuclear accident. Each link in the nuclear fuel chain releases radiation, starting with drilling for uranium; it then continues for generations because nuclear waste includes plutonium that will remain toxic for thousands of years. Despite years of research, countries with nuclear energy programs such as the United States have failed to solve the challenge of finding safe and secure storage for 'spent' nuclear fuel... There are presently over 400 nuclear power plants in the world - many, in places at high risk for natural disaster or political upheaval. These plants provide less than 7% of the world's total energy supply. As world leaders, you can work together to replace this small amount of energy from other readily available, very safe and affordable sources of energy to move us towards a carbon-free and nuclear-free future.”

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Helen Caldicott, MBBS, President of the Nuclear Policy Research Institute, wrote the following in her 2006 book*Nuclear Power Is Not the Answer*:

"Miners, workers, and residents in the vicinity of the mining and milling functions, and workers involved in the enrichment processes necessary to create nuclear fuel are at risk for exposure to unhealthy amounts of radiation and have increased incidences of cancer and related diseases as a result...

Relatively small but significant amounts of radiation are released on a daily basis into the air and water during the course of mining, milling, and enriching uranium for fuel to create the nuclear energy. Additionally, a nuclear power plant cannot operate without routinely releasing radioactivity into the air and water through the normal operation of nuclear reactors. Finally, and most frighteningly, accidental releases of even more radiation are commonplace in the nuclear industry…

Radioactive gases that leak from fuel rods are also routinely released or 'vented' into the atmosphere at every nuclear reactor. These gases are temporarily stored to allow the short-lived isotopes to decay and then released to the atmosphere through engineered holes in the reactor roof and from the steam generators. This process is called 'venting.' About 100 cubic feet of radioactive gases are also released hourly from the condensers at the reactor...

Although the nuclear industry claims it is ‘emission’ free, in fact it is collectively releasing millions of curies [the standard unit of radioactivity measurement] annually... By contrast, coal plants release some uranium and uranium daughter products in their smoke but very little radiation compared to atomic plants, and certainly no fission products…

Quite apart from these routine radioactive releases is the almighty problem of radioactive waste. Each regular 1,000 megawatt nuclear power plant generates 30 tons of extremely potent radioactive waste annually... the nuclear industry has yet to determine how safely to dispose of this deadly material, which remains radioactive for tens of thousands of years…"

**Source Four: View the links and websites, answering the questions that follow.**

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d7LO8lL4Ai4>

What information from your clip could you use to best support your thesis?

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1. <http://thesolutionsproject.org/why-clean-energy/>

What are the energy alternatives the Solutions Project has for Connecticut? What are the benefits of these proposed programs?

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1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6oQAyunXqk>

Why does the tour guide at the Fukushima site feel remorse?

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TED Debates: Does the World Need Nuclear Energy?

<https://www.ted.com/talks/debate_does_the_world_need_nuclear_energy>

Task: Identify the arguments of each of the presenters and evaluate these arguments

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Pro Nuclear Energy  Stewart Brand | Anti- Nuclear Energy  Mark Z. Jacobson |
| Arguments |  |  |
| Supporting Details |  |  |
| Evaluations of Arguments |  |  |

How do you Evaluate an Argument?

An argument is a conclusion based on evidence. In order to evaluate an argument, you must take into account the following:

1. Judge the Evidence and Logic that the argument is based on.
2. Judge the Fairness of the argument. (does the argument contain bias? Is the argument on-sided or are their alternative points of view that the argument does not address?

**Complete the organizer provided**

After you have reviewed the research sources, answer the questions below. Your answers to these questions will be scored. Also, they will help you think about the sources you have read and viewed, which should help you write your report. Answer the questions in the spaces provided below each question.

1. From the sources you have reviewed, summarize 3 major arguments that support, and 3 major arguments that oppose, the use of nuclear power for generating electricity. For each of the arguments, cite at least one source that supports this fact or point of view.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Argument / Fact in Favor of Nuclear Power | Source Supporting This Argument |
| 1. \* | |
| 2. \* | |
| 3. \* | |
| Argument / Fact in Opposition to Nuclear Power | Source Supporting This Argument |
| 1. \* | |
| 2. \* | |
| 3. \* | |

2. Evaluate the credibility of the arguments and evidence presented by these sources. Which of the sources are more trustworthy and why? Which of the sources warrant some skepticism because of bias or insufficient evidence?

**“Should Connecticut agree to build another nuclear power plant in the state?”- Argumentative Performance Task**

**PART TWO: THE ESSAY**

You will now review your notes and sources in order to plan, draft, revise and edit your writing. You may use your notes and refer to the sources.

**Your Assignment**

After completing your research, you shared your findings with your favorite teacher. They have suggested to you that you write a 5 paragraph argumentative essay that discusses whether the representatives of the states of Connecticut should vote yes to building a new nuclear power plant in the state. Your essay will be delivered to your representatives for their consideration prior to the vote. Take a stance in your essay. Make sure you establish an argumentative claim, address potential counterarguments, and support your claim from the sources you have read. Develop your ideas clearly and use your own words, except when quoting directly from the sources. Be sure to reference at least 4 sources by author or number when using details or facts directly from the sources. Review the rubric that will be used to score your essay before beginning to write. If you have questions about organization/purpose, evidence/elaboration, or conventions please ask.

**Manage your time carefully so that you can complete the following:**

* Plan your multi-paragraph argumentative essay
* Write your multi-paragraph argumentative essay
* Revise and edit the final draft of your multi-paragraph argumentative essay

**Report Scoring**

Your report will be scored on the following criteria:

1. Statement of purpose / focus and organization: How well did you clearly state your claim on the topic, maintain your focus, and address the alternate and opposing claims? How well did your ideas logically flow from the introduction to conclusion using effective transitions? How well did you stay on topic throughout the report?

2. Elaboration of evidence: How well did you elaborate your arguments and discussion of counterarguments, citing evidence from your sources? How well did you effectively express ideas using precise language and vocabulary that were appropriate for the audience and purpose of your report?

3. Conventions: How well did you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling?

Now begin work on your report. Manage your time carefully so that you can:

• plan your report

• write your report

• revise and edit for a final draft

Word-processing tools and spell check are available to you.

Type your response in the space provided. Write as much as you need to fulfill the requirements of the task; you are not limited by the size of the response area on the screen.