

Going for the Look

On-Demand Writing Assignment

You will have 45 minutes to plan and write an essay on the topic assigned below. Before you begin writing, read the passage carefully and plan what you will say. Explain Cohen's argument and discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with his analysis. Support your position, providing reasons and examples from your own experience, observations, or reading. Your essay should be as well-organized and carefully written as you can make it.

“Retailers defend the approach to hiring based on image as necessary and smart, and industry experts see the point. ‘In today’s competitive retail environment, the methods have changed for capturing the consumer’s awareness of your brand,’ said Marshal Cohen, a senior industry analyst with the NPD Group, a market research firm. ‘Being able to find a brand enhancer, or what I call a walking billboard, is critical. It’s really important to create an environment that’s enticing to the community, particularly with the younger, fashionable market. A guy wants to go hang out in a store where he can see good-looking gals.’”

Explain Cohen's argument and discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with his analysis. Support your position, providing reasons and examples from your own experience, observations, or reading.

The sample student essays that follow reflect the EPT Scoring Guide's criteria.

Sample student essay with a score of 6:

Portable Posters

In today's society, marketing is being taken to new heights. Not only do companies spend a majority of their money on advertising, they also use their employees as portable posters. If employees are supposed to be “walking

billboards,” then most people would agree that not everyone will be eligible for that particular position. Discrimination is defined as showing favor unjustly. What some corporations are doing today is clearly unjust. People cannot control their appearance completely. Therefore, I must agree with Steven Greenhouse, the author of “Going for the Look, but Risking Discrimination.” Mr. Greenhouse has clearly shown in his article that only hiring certain people that “look great,” is definitely discrimination and should not occur. That is why I disagree with Mr. Cohen’s analysis. It is a known fact that one cannot sell everything by appearance alone.

Mr. Cohen is a senior industry analyst with the NPD Group, a market research firm. He said, “Retailers defend the approach to hiring based on image as necessary and smart, and the industry experts see the point.” I thought that people were supposed to be hired based on their ability. In fact, Stephen J. Roppolo, a New Orleans lawyer who represents many hotels and restaurants, said “I tell employers that their main focus needs to be hiring somebody who can get the job done.” Hiring for looks must be fairly risky from a legal standpoint because even lawyers that represent the businesses are saying that they should hire based on merit so that they do not get into trouble with the law.

I have seen some first hand examples of questionable hiring practices. Many of the restaurants near my home are excellent examples of hiring based on appearance. At the restaurants, I have noticed that the servers are usually Caucasian and that the bus-boys and chefs tend to be Mexican-Americans. I have also noticed that the Chinese restaurants in my area only have Asian-Americans as waiters and waitresses. I thought that America was on the way to becoming a place full of equal opportunity. Apparently, we are taking a step back, instead of moving forward.

Is hiring based on how attractive people are illegal? No, there is not a specific law saying that businesses cannot. Just because it is not illegal does not mean that it should be done. I feel that Mr. Cohen’s analysis is not correct. If a company had an extremely innovative and sought after product due to its wide range of uses and quality, the company would not need to stoop to such discriminatory hiring practices. The product would simply sell itself. After all, every company would love to get by without spending one dime on advertising. Imagine a world where everyone was hired based on merit. Productivity would increase everywhere because people would be doing what they are best at instead of just standing around and “looking great.”

6

Commentary

This essay illustrates the EPT Scoring Guide’s criteria for a score of 6. The superior response indicates that the writer is very well-prepared to handle college-level reading and writing.

- The writer understands and focuses clearly on the topic raised by the quotation in the thesis, “. . . only hiring certain people that ‘look great,’ is definitely discrimination and should not occur.”
- The summary of Cohen’s argument is clear and accurate, and the paraphrasing is effective.

- The writer analyzes the issue of hiring for looks thoughtfully and has developed an insightful response focused on the legal implications of the practice.
- The essay is coherently organized and developed with a body paragraph of analysis and a paragraph citing the example of hiring on the basis of appearance in ethnic restaurants, which extends the response beyond that which is provided in the reading passage. The conclusion makes a strong case for hiring on the basis of merit.
- The writer demonstrates a strong command of language and syntactic variety, alternating fluent, longer sentences with short sentences to make a point.
- The essay is virtually error-free and reflects the writer's command of the conventions of incorporating the words and ideas of others into the writer's response to an argument.

Sample student essay with a score of 5:

Discrimination Vs Wealth

One of the biggest problems causing separation in today's society is discrimination based on looks. Our morality is constantly decreasing due to greed and selfishness. At one point in time we focused on the well being of every human being no matter their race, color or gender; looks meant nothing while love and friendships meant everything. On the contrary to Marshal Cohen's statement that a "brand enhancer" or a "walking bill board" is critical, hiring people based on looks is not morally correct, and morality should be held above money and reputation.

Hiring by looks can cause numerous amounts of issues, both at the governmental level and the emotional level. As Olophius Perry stated in the article, *Going for the Look but Risking Discrimination*, "If you're hiring by looks, then you can run into problems of race discrimination, national origin discrimination, gender discrimination, age discrimination, and even disability discrimination." (Greenhouse 1). Our country specifically was founded on equality and equal opportunity for all. When businesses start hiring based on looks and/or gender, our country's morals begin to slip slowly through Uncle Sam's fingers. Discrimination of any sort may also cause a person great emotional damage. Perhaps a hard working, well-kept, person was turned away from a job because of his or her un-attractive face, that person could be so hurt that they commit suicide; while one person gets richer because of this life changing decision they made, another person's sanity is lost. This type of discrimination is not worth the pain and suffering of one human being in return for fame and money.

Young men and women are used as sex symbols in today's twisted society. Many companies will hire young attractive women based on their beauty with the intention of giving men something to look at as well as giving them an incentive to come into their store. As Marshal Cohen replied, "A guy wants to go hang out in a store where he can see good looking gals" (Greenhouse 3) shows that companies hire these girls only to bring in more profits by using

them as an object, rather than a person, that men can drool over. What kind of messages are we sending to our future generations? Is it that girls must learn that they will not receive respect and that they need to weigh 110 pounds with big lips in order to be successful in life? Pressures are enormously overwhelming on today's young adults to look "perfect" in society's eyes. The pressures build up and eventually lead to up to unhealthy alternatives to being skinny, becoming "built", or having the exact look being sought. While our society may look better if we allow companies to hire by looks, it is also increasingly becoming unhealthy.

In conclusion, hiring based on looks solely to raise profits is ethically and morally wrong. This idea will eventually bring our morality to an end. Health rates will drop and human sanity will continue to be taken away. In order to save our society and its morals, we should ban discrimination, or as some would call it hiring based on looks.

5

Commentary

This essay illustrates the EPT Scoring Guide's criteria for a score of 5. The clear competence of the essay indicates that this writer is quite ready to handle college-level reading and writing.

- The writer understands the topic and accurately summarizes Cohen's position, using his phrases "brand enhancer" and "walking bill board." The essay's thesis is clear, but the writer could have sharpened it by refraining from presenting it as a three-part divided thesis.
- The essay reflects the writer's understanding of some of the complexity of the issue. The analysis of the impact of the practice of "hiring for the look" on young adults' self-image is thoughtful and adds depth, but the assertion that it causes insanity and suicides is unsubstantiated.
- The essay is well-organized and coherent, with the writer focusing on the legal implications of hiring on the basis of looks in the first body paragraph and the individual implications in the second. Each paragraph is thoroughly developed, and the conclusion presents a strong recommendation.
- The essay displays some syntactic variety and facility, with occasional lapses in word choice and sentence construction.
- The essay has scattered errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics (e.g., "numerous amounts of issues," "using them as an object, rather than a person, that men can drool over").

Sample student essay with a score of 4:

Beauty = Money

Marshall Cohen's argument is basically that beautiful women sell, and I strongly agree. It's true that guys want to hang out in places where there are beautiful women. It's also true that these women represent an image and that if that image is pleasing to the eye then other women will want to emulate it.

4

Being a guy, I know the power women have over us as a gender; especially the good looking ones. The fact is that businesses know this and exploit it. Last year alone I must have spent a good 300 dollars because a cute girl would ask me to donate to the charity, or that I looked good in a pair of pants she wanted me to buy. Also, it's how most guys decide on things. Take for instance if there were two restaurants that served similar food. We would almost always end up going to the one with the good looking waitresses. Guys are suckers for cute girls and will spend great amounts of time and money just to be around them. However, men aren't nearly as bad as women.

When the average girl sees a super model or Britney Spears wearing Abercrombie and Fitch they think the key to being beautiful and popular is to match their wardrobes. They feel that if they dress like their idols they'll be more important in the public eye. I have a friend that buys every outfit she sees Mandy Moore wear on television. It's already cost her over a thousand dollars, but she doesn't mind just as long as people make her feel important.

In the end using beautiful people to advertise your product translates to one thing: money. The equation is simple, the better the girl looks the more money you make, and as long as the public sees beauty as only skin deep this will always be true.

Commentary

This essay illustrates the EPT Scoring Guide's criteria for a score of 4. This adequate response to the topic suggests that the writer should be able to handle college-level reading and writing.

- The writer demonstrates a generally accurate but somewhat simplistic understanding of the passage, summarizing it as “beautiful women sell.” The writer accepts this argument on the basis of his own experience and develops his response accordingly.
- The essay maintains a clear focus on the point. It is organized around the assertion that both men and women are attracted to businesses that “hire for the look.” However, it never acknowledges the legal or moral counter-arguments to this position.
- The personal examples support the writer's position and are developed in some detail, but the essay would have been strengthened by more analysis of the issues.
- The language is fluent and often colloquial (“Guys are suckers for cute girls”), in keeping with the writer's personal approach to the topic. However, some sentences are not formed correctly (e.g., “. . . because a cute girl would ask me to donate to the charity, or that I looked good. . . .”; “Take for instance if there were two restaurants that served similar food.”)
- The essay generally demonstrates control of grammar, usage, and mechanics.

Sample student essay with a score of 3:

Going For the Look

There are three types of people in the world when it comes to style. There are the fashionable, who care what they look like and what other people think. There are the unfashionable, who think they are fashionable but do not run with the trend. Then there are the people in between. They could care less what others think.

To try to get people to buy their products, a producer will look at all three types of people and chose the one that best fits the product. So the Gap would choose someone who looks good in their product. There are certain clothes that fit certain bodies certain ways. People do not want to see a fat, ugly person in tight pants and a short shirt.

A place like Hot Topic wants to draw in a punk rocker crowd so they will hire people that look as if they are punk rockers. These people will have many piercings and tattoos that are visible to the public. Only certain people do not think that that stuff is not attractive and Hot Topic wants to bring them into the store.

Thrift stores and hand me down stores would hire the last type of person. People who shop at those stores do not care what they look like or cannot afford to shop anywhere else. These people cannot choose what the person selling their clothes looks like.

In conclusion, there are three types of people in the fashion industry. Some are shoe-ins for certain jobs just from what they look like. Others cannot get those jobs if they tried. Cohen's statement is correct. Now a day people hire for looks not skill.

3

Commentary

This essay illustrates the EPT Scoring Guide's criteria for a score of 3. Although the essay suggests a developing competence, it is flawed in significant ways that suggest the writer's need for additional practice before being ready to succeed in college-level reading and writing.

- The writer does not explain Cohen's argument, instead writing an essay about style.
- The thesis, "There are three types of people in the world when it comes to style," does not focus on the issue of "hiring for the look." The writer addresses the issue in the body of the essay by saying that Gap and Hot Topic hire people who look good in the company's clothes, while thrift stores have no choice in who they hire; however, the writer directly addresses Cohen's argument only in the final sentences.
- The body paragraphs are series of assertions that lack effective transitions.
- Most of the sentences lack variety (e.g., the series of "There are . . ." sentences in the introduction), and word choice is imprecise ("that stuff").
- The essay has an accumulation of errors, especially in spelling and punctuation.

Sample student essay with a score of 2:

Going for the Look

Cohen's argument expresses his oppions and his only the may not matter in the sites of other people. I don't agree or disagree with his argument. I hold this position because of three reasons, for starters is the retailers choice who he or she wants to hire not his. And for there businesses to expand and to grow then they must hire whoever appeals to the consumer. Last his argument may or may not be true and tell complete truth, so l'm not going to base my facts or opions on him because sometimes you should keep them to your self.

As I Said before it is the retailers choice who they want to hire and if you must ensist on talking bad about these people then you must have problems with yourself maybe your jellous, just because your not in the positon to hire whoever you want doesn't mean the people that do make those choices wheather they are right or wrong.

The retailers must hire the right personel to appeal to the consumer if that means only hiring whites, just blacks or purple, green, yellow it does not matter because that is what they have to do to sell there product.

My third and final reason is that I don't really want to agree or disagree baed on the facts that he is giving me are more better things to worry about then l some stores have racial issues that is there business not yours.

To conclude Cohen argument expresses his own oppions that might be better kept to himself.

2

Commentary

This essay illustrates the EPT Scoring Guide's criteria for a score of 2. The serious flaws here indicate that this writer will need considerable additional practice before being ready to succeed in college-level reading and writing.

- The writer demonstrates a basic understanding of the passage but is unable to respond meaningfully to the topic, instead resorting to a personal attack on Cohen.
- The writer fails to respond to Cohen's argument with a focused thesis. The sentence "I don't agree or disagree with this argument" suggests a failure to understand the need to take a position and provide evidence to support it.
- Although the writer attempts three body paragraphs, they are severely underdeveloped.
- The writer lacks basic control of syntax and vocabulary.
- The writer has serious and persistent errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics that severely interfere with meaning. In particular, the sentence boundary errors and serious spelling errors obscure the meaning.

Sample student essay with a score of 1:

Their many methods of hiring people. Many markets know hire just because of the image of a person. In my opinion I agree and disagree to a certain point. Their could be certain stores that have people who have expirience, no experience, and just for the look.

When you have a pearson who has experience you could expeted from them to accomplished their job. They would always be on time or even earlier. You would not hear bad comments about that person Their very reaponsible and would not complain about geting their job done

1

Commentary

This essay illustrates the EPT Scoring Guide’s criteria for a score of 1. The fundamental deficiencies of this essay clearly indicate that the writer needs much additional practice to be ready to succeed at college-level reading and writing.

- The writer indicates only a slight understanding of the passage and fails to refer to Cohen’s argument.
- The essay seems to be about qualifications for jobs, with one qualification being “the look.” However, the relationship of the thesis to the topic is not clear. The sentence, “In my opinion I agree and disagree to a certain point” suggests a serious lack of focus.
- The essay appears to be incomplete, with the second and third body paragraphs and the conclusion implied by the thesis but unwritten.
- The writer lacks basic control of syntax and vocabulary.
- The writer has serious and persistent errors in mechanics that severely interfere with meaning. Spelling and verb form errors are pervasive.