

Step 1: Dissect the Prompt

Steps of Prompt Dissection	What does the prompt say? (Record the specific wording of each step from the prompt.)	What does this mean to you? (State each part in your own words.)
1. Determine the context or background information.	<i>"Many recent college graduates have faced record levels of unemployment. This situation has led people to question what they value about higher education. Some high school students and their parents are wondering if a college education is worth the cost. Others, however, believe that a college education prepares students for more than just a job or career."</i>	Graduates are having trouble finding work upon completion of college, which is leading to speculation on the effectiveness of postsecondary education as a whole.
2. Locate the sources that you will draw from to inform or support your argument.	<p>"Source A (Crawford)</p> <p>Source B (Roth)</p> <p>Source C (chart)</p> <p>Source D (Leonhardt)</p> <p>Source E (Wieder)</p> <p>Source F (Pew)"</p>	Identify the sources in which I will be gathering information and evidence to support my argument.
3. Identify the broad task of the prompt.	<i>"Carefully read the following six sources, including the introductory information for each source. Then synthesize information from at least three of the sources and incorporate it into a coherent, well-developed essay..."</i>	Analyze the given sources, and then gather information from at least three of them and use them to develop my position in an argument.
4. Determine the specific task of the prompt.	<i>"...well-developed essay that evaluates whether college is worth its cost."</i>	Argue whether or not the cost of college is worth it or not, given the previously mentioned situation of graduates facing unemployment.

Steps of Prompt Dissection	What does the prompt say? (Record the specific wording of each step from the prompt.)	What does this mean to you? (State each part in your own words.)
<p>5. Determine the EXPLICIT steps that must be taken to complete the task.</p>	<p>"Carefully read the following six sources, including the introductory information for each source. Then synthesize information from at least three of the sources and incorporate it into a coherent, well-developed essay..."</p> <p>"Your argument should be the focus of your essay. Use the sources to develop your argument and explain the reasoning for it. Avoid merely summarizing the sources. Indicate clearly which sources you are drawing from, whether through direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary. You may cite the sources as Source, A, Source B, etc., or by using the descriptions in parentheses."</p> <p>***Specific words above are bolded.</p>	<p>Read: First, read the six provided sources.</p> <p>Synthesize: Choose three of the sources to draw information from in the response.</p> <p>Incorporate: Then, choose specific evidence from those chosen sources to include in the argument.</p> <p>Use: A claim needs to be stated, as well as the sources needed to be used to support and explain the argument.</p> <p>Explain: It is essential to explain how the evidence supports the claim. Commentary as well is essential, which is the explanation of the evidence.</p> <p>Indicate: Identify directly which specific sources are being used, be it through quotations, paraphrases, or summarization.</p> <p>Cite: Recognize where the evidence is coming from.</p>
<p>6. Consider the implicit directions or expectations.</p>	<p>Not applicable. The implicit part of the prompt is not stated directly. Record the implicit expectations in the next column.</p>	<p>Overall, this is the part in which insightful interpretation goes a long way, where I need to consider many different factors and/or questions, such as what the author's position is or why they wrote what they wrote.</p>

Step 2: Analyze Your Sources Using S.M.E.L.L.

A solid understanding of your sources is the first step in being able to have a conversation with them. Review all six sources that are provided for question one (refer to the link on the lesson page). Choose **three** of the sources and complete the S.M.E.L.L. analysis chart. Be sure to identify the sources you analyze in each column.

S.M.E.L.L. Step	Source B	Source C	Source E
S—Sender/Receiver. Ask these questions: Who is the writer? Who is the audience? What knowledge does the audience need coming into the argument? What are the audience's expectations? What is the writer's purpose?	Writer: Michael Roth (President of a liberal arts university) Roth's intended audience here has to do with students who have not yet gone to college and are in the "consideration stage." The audience would be expected to be familiar with what a liberal arts education is, and the different majors there are. They would expect to understand why college education is beneficial, and why a liberal arts education with help develop people. As a whole, Roth's purpose is to convince his audience that going to college and getting a liberal arts education, and that the high cost of it is beyond worth it; stating that it helps to make future obstacles in the future less challenging.	Writer: Heidi Shierholz Shierholz targets her article towards college students and those who are associated with helping them financially. The audience should already have an understanding of the high costs of college, and the effects of that. The audience's expectations have to do with the economic standing surrounding college, and working upon completion of postsecondary education. Shierholz overall intends, through this article, to explain and convince how going to college is not necessary to have a well-paying job, and that it will be a while until that is the case.	Writer: Ben Wieder The intended audience of Wieder's article is for college and university faculty members/administrators, with the goal of bringing awareness to a fellowship program. Expected knowledge would include the cost of college and its effects, and as well as why people pay the costs. The audience would have the expectation of learning about this program, and why it is beneficial, as well as how you can still have a successful career with no college education.
M—Message. Ask these questions:	The main subject of this article is the benefits of getting a liberal arts education in	Inflation has had a direct impact on the wages of college graduates, resulting	Decision-making is the main focal point of this article. Whether to spend the high price of

S.M.E.L.L. Step	Source B	Source C	Source E
<p>What is the overall issue, problem, and/or subject?</p> <p>What is the claim?</p> <p>What is the counterclaim?</p> <p>What is the historical context surrounding the issue?</p> <p>How is the counterclaim addressed?</p> <p>Where is the counterclaim addressed?</p>	<p>college. Roth's claim is that doing this helps to support challenges/obstacles that come along the way and after. The counterclaim surrounding his claim is that the price to attend college is too high and does not fully do its needed preparation. Roth addresses this by providing context and insight into how college/liberal arts education can indeed be beneficial and help prepare students for their lives ahead of them.</p>	<p>in them to stop increasing. Shierholz claims that people do not need to attend college to have a good-paying job. The counterclaim here is that despite the high costs, it does a lot to benefit the student in the long run (even though it is not directly states outwardly). She addresses this by bringing attention to the fact that college can place students into debt problems, which can harm them.</p>	<p>college, or to not (which would help save the money) and take the risk of making it in the world without the education. Wieder claims that because of the high costs associated with postsecondary education, people really do not need to go to college. The counterclaim states that only some people are able to take this risk, and not all. This is addressed by making mention that social pressure will lead to "<i>less innovation in the future.</i>"</p>
<p>E—Evidence. Ask these questions:</p> <p>What evidence is used to support the writer's claim?</p> <p>What evidence is used to refute the opposition's position?</p> <p>Can the evidence be verified?</p> <p>Are the sources credible?</p> <p>Has ample evidence been provided?</p> <p>Does the writer use</p>	<p>Roth uses his own opinions to help support his position. Despite the fact that he provides information about this type of education and establishes his argument in a well-developed manner, he does not directly provide any other credible sources. Using other sources would help convince the audience more, as they are most likely to not just believe one person when it comes to this if they need more proof/evidence. Because of using more opinions over stated facts, there may be a split in the audience.</p>	<p>To support Shierholz's claim, a graph is included which shows entry-level wages of college graduates over the years (specifically highlighting the current decrease in those wages). The decrease shown on the graph helps to refute the counterclaim, by showing that college is not the only route needed to get a good job. Since this graph comes from a credible source, it can be verified. Shierholz uses ample evidence, as data and facts are both given. Since this article presents a matter that a high majority of college</p>	<p>Wieder makes mention to the fact that the fellowship program helps winners to "<i>develop their ideas more quickly than they would at a traditional college.</i>" This directly supports his main claim as it shows that college is not the only route to success. Wieder also uses quotes, such as from the co-founder of PayPal. Those looking to soon attend college or those who are affected by college finances would most likely find this convincing and persuasive, especially since it provides another perspective to the matter.</p>

S.M.E.L.L. Step	Source B	Source C	Source E
<p>more facts, quotes, examples, or anecdotes?</p> <p>Which audience would find the evidence persuasive?</p>	<p>(these are not separate questions, still a part of above)</p>	<p>students face, they would find this persuasive.</p>	<p>(these are not separate questions, still a part of above)</p>
<p>L—Logic. Ask these questions:</p> <p>Is the writer's claim reasonable?</p> <p>Are the writer's reasons logical?</p> <p>How is the argument structured? Which argument styles does the writer employ?</p> <p>What is the effect of syntax (sentence structure)?</p> <p>How has the writer connected the evidence and his or her claim?</p> <p>Has the writer used qualifiers like "some," "many," "most," etc.?</p> <p>Do you see any logical fallacies?</p> <p>What types of appeals are being made?</p>	<p>Roth's claim can be classified as reasonable, since he uses good judgement to defend his claim on why a liberal arts education is indeed beneficial. The main problem though, as stated before, is that he does not provide any direct evidence from other sources; he simply uses his own opinion and judgement (which is fine, but not does take the argument to its fullest potential). Presenting in a casual way, Wieder follows up each claim with an opinion to support each one.</p>	<p>Shierholz makes a very reasonable claim, as this issue is very evident to a lot of people, and logical evidence is provided to support her claims. The evidence she uses comes straight from credible sources. Background information is provided, then some context, followed by claims and evidence. The syntax used appears more logical, and appeals to that sense. The counterclaim, however, is not directly stated, but is implied. This may result in not all picking up on it if they are not reading carefully enough.</p>	<p>This claim is a bit in the middle, and not the most reasonable as a whole. Not everyone can succeed without a college education, it to the core really depends on what you are getting into. Wieder does provide very reasonable explanations for his claims though, with common ground being established throughout.</p>

S.M.E.L.L. Step	Source B	Source C	Source E
Where are the hole in the writer's argument?	(these are not separate questions, still a part of above)	(these are not separate questions, still a part of above)	(these are not separate questions, still a part of above)
L—Language. Ask these questions: What type of diction (formal, informal, scientific, etc.) is used? Which words have denotative or connotative significance? What is the writer's tone? Which stylistic elements are employed? Which rhetorical strategies are used?	The diction used by Roth is very elated/prideful, as he speaks on behalf of liberal arts education (being the president of a college himself). He targets appeal through emotion and logic, through the opinion evidence used. Being prideful, he gives off a tone of excitement and passion as he explains what it is and how it is beneficial. No noticeable rhetorical strategies are really used, and this could have benefited from the use of some.	Shierholz uses much more formal diction. She takes a much more straightforward approach when it comes to her presentation, not conveying as much emotion. The tone is serious, and a little worry when it comes to the fact of how many people this issue affects. No noticeable rhetorical strategies are used.	Wieder's diction is more casual, in which he displays and informs about a fellowship program. Some words give a sort of more aggressive/assertive connotation, having to do with people going to college thinking it is strictly necessary. His usage of quotes helps move his piece forward, giving more insight into the matter.

Step 3: Draft Your Claim

Write three possible claims for this prompt:

1. Even with the high costs that come along with it, receiving a postsecondary education is essential to having a well-paying job/career.
2. With the high costs, the decrease in wages for college graduates, and how unnecessary it has become with changes in the world, college is not worth its price.
3. Many find it difficult to decide if they want to receive a postsecondary education, posing numerous risks such as potential future debt, or to not go at all, which can bring even greater risks for the future.

Write a brief paragraph reflecting on your claim statements. Rank your three possible claims from weakest to strongest and explain your ranking. Which one would you prefer to use? Why? Which claim shows the most complex thinking? Why?

Out of the three claim statements I made, the first and second ones are the stronger ones, while I feel the third one (as compared to the others) is not as strong. The first statement is much more straightforward, while the others are more complex. However, the other two show more complex thinking, bringing in more detail. I would prefer to use the second one as I feel it is right in the middle when it comes to being simple and complex, and not being too much of one over the other.