

APEP SAMPLE Written Application Exercise

Intended for Distribution

Please pick *one* of the following texts, read it closely, and write a short essay about it. Whatever you choose to write about, your writing should indicate that you have read and thought about the text you select. Remember to choose and write about only one text.

We encourage you to take your time to read the text closely several times and make notes as you prepare to write. The final essay you hand in should be legible, but it is fine if occasional words are crossed out and rewritten. Please write your name on each page you hand in.

Text 1

“Looking Into the Brain: The Neuroscience Revolution” in *The Body Keeps the Score* by Bessel Van Der Kolk

Today there’s a huge body of scientific and popular literature about the difference between the right and left brains. . . . Our scans clearly showed that images of past trauma activate the right hemisphere of the brain and deactivate the left.

We now know that the two halves of the brain do speak different languages. The right is intuitive, emotional, visual, spatial, and tactual, and the left is linguistic, sequential, and analytical. While the left half of the brain does all the talking, the right half of the brain carries the music of experience. It communicates through facial expressions and body language and by making the sounds of love and sorrow: by singing, swearing, crying, dancing, or mimicking. The right brain is the first to develop in the womb, and it carries the nonverbal communication between mothers and infants. We know the left hemisphere has come online when children start to understand language and learn how to speak. This enables them to name things, compare them, understand their interrelations, and begin to communicate their own unique, subjective experiences to others.

Text 2

From *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates

If the streets shackled my right leg, the schools shackled my left. Fail to comprehend the streets and you gave up your body now. But fail to comprehend the schools and you gave up your body later. I suffered at the hands of both, but I resent the schools more.

Text 3

“Thin Cities 2” in *Invisible Cities* by Italo Calvino

Now I shall tell of the city of Zenobia, which is wonderful in this fashion: though set on dry terrain it stands on high pilings, and the houses are of bamboo and zinc, with many platforms and balconies placed on stilts at various heights, crossing one another, linked by ladders and hanging sidewalks, surmounted by cone-roofed belvederes, barrels storing water, weathervanes, jutting pulleys, and fish poles, and cranes.

No one remembers what need or command or desire drove Zenobia’s founders to give their city this form, and so there is no telling whether it was satisfied by the city as we see it today, which has perhaps grown through successive superimpositions from the first, now undecipherable plan. But what is certain is that if you ask an inhabitant of Zenobia to describe his vision of a happy life, it is always a city like Zenobia that he imagines, with its pilings and its suspended stairways, a Zenobia perhaps quite different, a-flutter with banners and ribbons, but always derived by combining elements of that first model.

This said, it is pointless trying to decide whether Zenobia is to be classified among happy cities or among the unhappy. It makes no sense to divide cities into these two species, but rather into another two: those that through the years and the changes continue to give their form to desires, and those in which desires either erase the city or are erased by it.

Text 4

“This is the Time for Silence” by Hafiz

The beauty of the mountain is talked about
most from a distance,

not while one is scaling the summit
with life at risk. That is the time for silence,
one-pointedness,

reflection, and drawing upon all your
skills so you might return from the cloud’s
domain

and inspire others to breathe closer to God,
while still human, the way you did.