

#24) PRACTICE TEST #1 FOR THE ADVANCED COMPOSITION EXEMPTION EXAMINATION

The purpose of this handout is to help you prepare for the Advanced Composition Exemption Exam. The actual exam is 90 minutes, and involves reading two sources and composing an essay in response to a prompt. We recommend that you use this handout to simulate the actual test by setting a timer for 90 minutes, reading the prompt and the two sources, and then composing an essay in the allotted time. Then, we recommend that you make an appointment with a QWC tutor to review your essay and to discuss test-taking strategies. If needed, you may repeat this process by using handout #25, which has another pair of sources and a different prompt. For additional detailed information on the exam, consult the University of Arkansas Testing Services website at www.uark.edu/ua/testing.

Practice Exam

To begin, read carefully the following edited and excerpted texts on the global warming debate. The first is an article by Naomi Oreskes from the *Washington Post*. The second is an editorial by Jack Strayer published in the *Charleston Gazette*. Then, write an essay of about 500 words, directed to an audience of educated readers, in which you develop a thoughtful position on the global warming debate. In addition to advancing your own position, the essay should also summarize and synthesize the main arguments of Oreskes and Strayer.

You have 90 minutes to read and write. You may use a print dictionary. You may use the last page of your blue essay book for scratch paper. Please write on every other line of the blue book pages. Remember that your primary purpose is to develop a cogent and persuasive argument. Your essay will be evaluated on the clarity and thoughtfulness of your ideas, the accuracy and effectiveness of your summarization of the authors' main ideas, and the organization and language of your composition.

Excerpt #1: Undeniable Global Warming by Naomi Oreskes (Published 12/26/04 in the *Washington Post*)

Many people mistakenly believe there is significant scientific disagreement about global climate change, when in fact there is a scientific consensus that Earth's climate is heating up and human activities are part of the reason. We need to stop repeating nonsense about the uncertainty of global warming and start talking seriously about addressing it.

The scientific consensus is clearly expressed in the reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Created in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Environmental Program, the IPCC evaluates the state of climate science as a basis for informed policy action. In its most recent assessment, the IPCC states unequivocally the consensus of scientific opinion regarding human activity's effect on Earth's climate: "Human activities . . . are modifying the concentration of atmospheric constituents . . . that absorb or scatter radiant energy. . . . [M]ost of the observed warming over the last 50 years is likely to have been due to the increase in greenhouse gas concentrations."

The IPCC is not alone in its conclusions. In recent years all major scientific bodies in the United States whose expertise bears directly on the matter have issued similar statements. A National Academy of Sciences report

begins unequivocally: "Greenhouse gases are accumulating in Earth's atmosphere as a result of human activities, causing surface air temperatures and subsurface ocean temperatures to rise." The report explicitly investigates and upholds the fairness of the IPCC's summary of professional scientific thinking. Others agree. The American Meteorological Society, the American Geophysical Union and the American Association for the Advancement of Science have all issued statements concluding that the evidence for human modification of climate is compelling.

Despite recent allegations to the contrary, these statements from the leadership of scientific societies and the IPCC accurately reflect the state of climate science research. Of 928 papers published in scientific journals between 1993 and 2003 related to the keywords "global climate change," 75 percent either explicitly or implicitly accepted the consensus view. The remaining 25 percent took no position on human activity's role in current climate change. None of the papers disagreed with the consensus position. The arguments to the contrary are not to be found in scientific literature, where scientific debates are properly adjudicated. There, the message is clear.

To be sure, a handful of scientists have questioned the details of climate models, the accuracy of methods for evaluating past global temperatures and the wisdom of attempting to predict the future. But this is quibbling about details. The basic picture is clear – changes are already occurring. A new report by the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment – a consortium of eight countries, including Russia and the United States – confirms that major changes are taking place in the Arctic, affecting both human and non-human communities. This information was conveyed to the U.S. Senate last month not by a radical environmentalist, as was recently alleged on the Web, but by Robert Corell, a senior fellow of the American Meteorological Society and former assistant director for geosciences at the National Science Foundation.

So why does it seem as if there is major scientific disagreement? Because a few noisy skeptics – most of whom are not scientists – have generated a lot of chatter in the mass media. At the National Press Club recently, Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor Richard Lindzen dismissed the consensus as "religious belief." But while no scientific conclusion can ever be proven, absolutely, it is no more a "belief" to say that Earth is heating up than it is to say that continents move, that germs cause disease, that DNA carries hereditary information or that quarks are the basic building blocks of subatomic matter. You can always find disagreement, but these conclusions represent our best available science, and therefore our best basis for reasoned action.

The chatter of skeptics is distracting us from the real issue: how best to respond to the threats that global warming presents.

Excerpt #2: Are the dangers of global warming overhyped?; Yes: Media demonstrates a liberal bias once again by Jack Strayer (Published 5/16/06 in the *Charleston Gazette*)

During the best of times there's a thin line between scientific fact and unadulterated baloney – to be sure, these aren't the best of times. Nowhere is the yawning gap between science and alarmism better illustrated than the rancorous debate over human contribution to global warming - which, pardon the pun, is almost boiling over. The argument has created fissures in the scientific and political communities - usually, but not always - with advocates of an unrestrained free market on one side and those of rigid government controls on the other. It's not quite to the point of becoming another "red state vs. blue state" cross-fire, but it's getting close.

In late March, Time magazine, CBS's "60 Minutes" and ABC News with former Clinton administration spinmeister George Stephanopoulos all produced lengthy reports pronouncing the ongoing debate about the cause of global warming all but over. No right-thinking American, they implied, could seriously question that SUVs, jet planes, electric utilities, chemical plants and fast-food outlets are belching megatons of carbon dioxide into the air and causing our fragile planet to rapidly overheat. Most egregious of all was Time, which resorted to the scare tactics of a supermarket tabloid - perhaps, to improve slumping circulation and ad revenues. "Be Worried, Be Very Worried," its cover all but blared.

Was the media's latest campaign to stampede Americans into accepting higher taxes and rigid restrictions on their personal freedoms part of an orchestrated campaign? Well, Time and ABC - in a special collaboration - released a new poll finding 85 percent of Americans now believe global warming is occurring and 62 percent believe it threatens them personally. This despite recent reports from the National Academy of Sciences and scientists at Harvard's prestigious Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, among others, pointing out that the rise in the Earth's temperature has been roughly one degree Fahrenheit over the last 120 years. That's well in line with the gradual pattern of warming and chilling that has occurred since humans began walking upright.

The Time-ABC poll strikes me as a bit peculiar. I don't recall hearing anyone express fears about global warming in the workplace, on vacation, or in my local pub, where every controversial topic is discussed ad infinitum.

Almost all the buzz about extreme climate change appears to be coming from the mainstream media. And no wonder! For the past decade, members of such groups as the Pew Center on Climate Change, the Sierra Club and the Environmental Defense Fund have spent money like drunken sailors to convince us the sky finally is falling. Unfortunately for them, many of the people now proposing global warming legislation were once warning about the perils of global chilling. In mid-1970s, for instance, The New York Times predicted that cooling temperatures "may mark the return of the Ice Age." Newsweek contributed a story declaring meteorologists were almost unanimous in their opinion that a "cooling world" might well cause catastrophic famine. The Christian Science Monitor noted that glaciers were advancing, growing seasons in England and Scandinavia were shortening, and "the North Atlantic is cooling down about as fast as an ocean can."

This isn't science folks; it's politics - fed like hog-swill to a ravenous media that often is too lazy to do any original research on the issue. Certainly scientists should study the impact of climate change and journalists should report it. What they shouldn't do is try to panic Americans over a dubious hypothetical. We have enough to worry about already, including Iraq, Avian flu, fanatic terrorists, AIDS and the decline in our nation's industrial might.