

UNIT ONE

AGAINST SCHOOL?



CONVERSATIONS WITH JT GATTO (AND OTHERS)

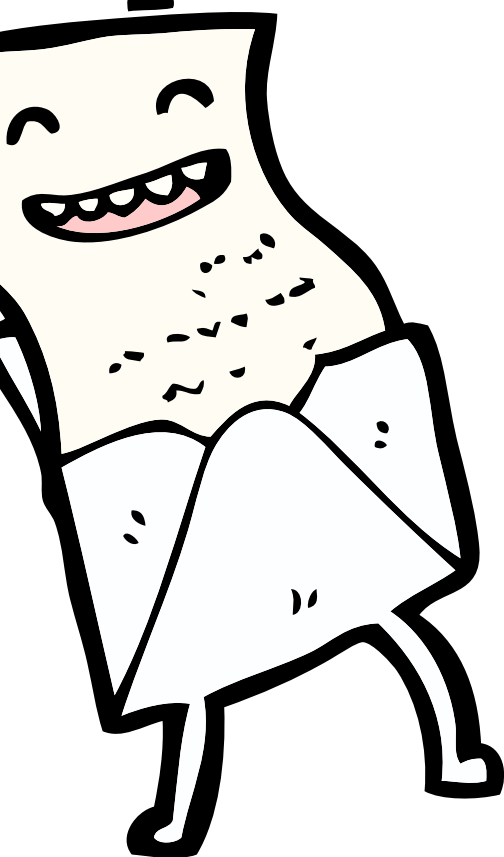
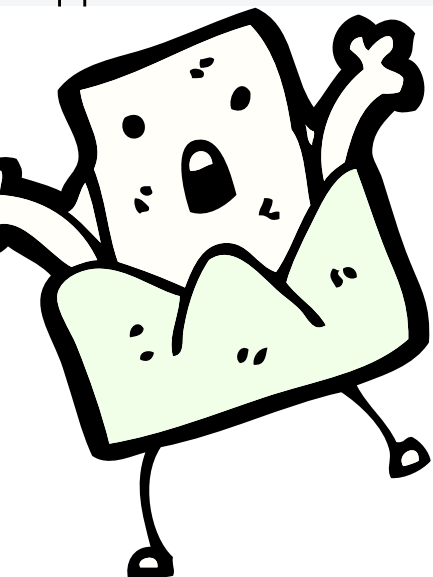
So, we've spent a while discussing how learning works and how teaching happens-- now it's time to voice your own opinions on the matter! For essay one, you will respond to **ONE** of the following two essay prompts:

OPTION ONE:

In his article "Against School," John Taylor Gatto argues that the American public school system conditions children to be gullible, mindless consumers. Was this your experience with K-12 schooling?

If not--what experiences DID you have? If so, did you find ways to resist? Remember! You might be somewhere in between yes and no-- your answer doesn't have to be absolute! But also remember that you can't simply answer "yes" or "no" to an essay question-- you need to elaborate in a way that is interesting and useful to your audience (which means you have to think about who your audience IS!)

For this essay, you will need to quote Gatto multiple times, as well as to use your own experiences. You may also use news stories and the Leamnson article or other outside sources if applicable.



OPTION TWO:

In this option, you may write an open letter to a person who had (or has) some say in your education: a principal, a teacher, the Secretary of Education for the United States. This letter should address Gatto's primary question: "Do we really need school? I don't mean education, just forced schooling: six classes a day, five days a week, nine months a year, for twelve years. Is this deadly routine really necessary? And if so, for what?"

Explain, using evidence from Gatto, from your own experience and from other outside sources, your stance. If you use this option, you should have some reason for addressing this particular person. "Mr. Johnson, I used to love school, but you made me realize I learn more on my own"; "Betsy DeVos, you may think that private schools are the way of the future, but you are turning your back on democracy and equality by making good education only available to a few with your proposed school voucher plan." (DeVos is the current Secretary of Education.) For this essay, you will need to quote Gatto multiple times, as well as to use your own experiences. You may also use news stories and the Leamnson article or other outside sources if applicable.

An "open letter" is a letter, often published in a newspaper, that is directed at an individual, but which a wide audience reads, which means you may have to explain some things you would not need to explain to that person directly. For example, I wouldn't have to say, "Ms. Speck, you were my second-grade teacher and for reasons I never understood, you sometimes came to class dressed as Queen Elizabeth" to Ms. Speck, but I would have to say that in an open letter.

