Source Entry for “If Everyone Gets an A, No One Gets an A”

Part 1 MLA Citation

Donahue, Tim. “Opinion | If Everyone Gets an A, No One Gets an A.” *The New York Times*, 23 Oct. 2023. *NYTimes.com*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/23/opinion/grade-inflation-high-school.html>.

Part 2 Summary (choice A)

In the opinion article, “If Everyone Gets an A, No One Gets an A,” Tim Donahue makes a point that the A grade is losing its significance. Donahue notes that there has been grade inflation  over the years. According to Donahue, as GPA scores increased while SAT and ACT scores dropped. Donahue expresses his sympathy towards his students because he knows they have lives outside of school. Donahue explains that if you are given a grade other than an A, society sees you as nothing.

Part 2 Summary (choice B)

The article “If Everyone Gets An A, No One Gets An A” by Tim Donahue tells us that teachers are easily giving out A’s which makes an A useless. According to Donahue he thinks teachers should grade harder because if they give everyone an A out of sympathy, the students wouldn’t learn to improve themselves because they see an A on their work. Donahue mentions that from 1998 to 2016 grades increased but college test grades have decreased, some colleges don't even have standardized tests anymore. Donahue also states in his article that he sees how students have a lot of stuff to do with no time for themselves so it's easier to be lenient on them. Lastly Donahue mentions that telling students that their work is “wonderful” and “impressive” doesn’t prepare students for the next year. As a way to help students improve their work Donahue believes educators should be harsher with grading because it causes improvement and determination to work harder to receive a grade they deserve. Donahue concludes by offering “a modest proposal” to teachers. When teachers receive a student paper that is promising but lacking in critical elements and is just a little underdeveloped, he cautions them from just slapping on an A minus grade. He asks teachers to consider all the learning the student will gain in doing a careful revision of adding, deleting, substituting points and of the benefit to the student who does second careful annotated re-reading of the text. He asks teachers to “consider the B plus.”

Part 3 Reflection (choice A)

Mr. Donahue talked about how we should grade students with more strict grading measurements. High grades are very easy to obtain in highschool. He talks about how most highschool students are graduating with grades in the A range. He also talks about how this can affect students' self esteem. When a student is so used to getting As and they get something lower they start to feel dumb about themselves. This can start leading to students getting more stressed when they feel like they are not getting high enough grades. He mentioned how it is much easier to just give good grades to students which doesn't do them any good. It is better for a student to be able to receive feedback on their work so they can improve and learn.

Part 3 Reflection (choice B)

We agree with Donahue’s points that teachers should stop inflating grades as it negatively affects students' way of learning. We have witnessed firsthand when grades have gone up and test scores have gone down, especially after the pandemic. We closely related to teachers inflating grades during the pandemic because we went through our first 2 years of highschool learning virtually. Teachers and students were lost and didn't know how to adjust to remote learning. Going back to school was also difficult for both parties because students were behind and had to adapt to being in school again. Although we feel that we are at a time where it is starting to negatively affect our higher education. We believe that harsh grades are good as long as students receive good feedback and constructive criticism. Coming from our personal experiences, we realize that assignments have lost their importance to strengthen students' learning. Teachers assign homework and classwork, but students mostly care about the grade rather than grasping new knowledge. We as students believe it's important for teachers to take their time to give feedback and guide students rather than rushing through the curriculum. As teachers continue to inflate grades students will continue to stop caring about getting a deeper understanding of the material.

Part 3 Reflection (choice C)

I agree with Donahue’s viewpoint that grade inflation needs to stop. When students receive grades that are not a realistic reflection of their true abilities, they feel satisfied by just meeting the standards. Student’s feel overconfident and only rely on what they learn during the lecture. Therefore, students stop studying and stop trying to improve. They feel superior and take fake high grades for granted. As students proceed in grade levels, they continue to believe the fantasy that high grades are easily attainable. Students start to believe they deserve every single high grade, without properly putting in the hard work. This creates the illusion that the next grade or level or that college will be just as easy and that they are ready for higher level work when they really are not. Teachers need to prepare students for the next step by giving appropriate grades and advice, and inflating grades is not going to help students meet that goal.

Part 4: Rhetorical Analysis

The article “If Everyone Gets an A, No One Gets an A” is an opinion piece written by Tim Donahue. His intended audience is educators and anyone interested in reading about the performance of students in American schools. The purpose of writing this is to bring awareness to the grading system and performance of students in school. The tone is concerned because grade inflation may affect students in the long run. Data and statistics that have to do with grade inflation show the use of logos. Donahue’s opinion is valid because he has been a high school English teacher for almost 30 years with personal experience. The New York Times is credible because they are worldwide and have around 740,000 subscribers, which shows a lot of people find them trustworthy.

Part 5 Notable Quotables

“A is now the most popular high school grade in America. Indeed, in 2016, [47 percent](https://www.insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2017/07/17/study-finds-notable-increase-grades-high-schools-nationally) of high school students graduated with grades in the A range” (Donahue).

“From 1998 to 2016, average high school G.P.A.s rose from 3.27 to 3.38, but average SAT scores fell from 1026 to 1002. ACT scores among the class of 2023 were [the worst](https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/11/us/act-scores-college-admissions.html) in over three decades” (Donahue).

“Also, it’s just so much easier to give good grades!” (Donahue).

“Passing off the average as exceptional with bromides like “wonderful” and “impressive” soothes the soul, but if there’s nothing there to modify these adjectives, teachers do little service to their colleagues who receive these students the next year” (Donahue).

“For now, a modest proposal: Consider the essay that comes in with a promising central idea but lacks support from a few critical moments of the text. It makes a smart but abrupt transition and closes with an interesting connection, a trifle undercooked. With another assiduous go-round, it might become something amazing. But please don’t give this draft an A-minus, the grade that puts so much potential to an early, convenient death. Instead, think of the produce of this student’s deletions and insertions, the music as he riffles through those pages he’ll annotate better next time, the reflective potential of a revision. Grading offers a singular place to teach such lessons of resilience. Instead, consider the B-plus” (Donahue).