

CELC Benchmark Essays

Prompt: Compare the lifestyle of your parents when they were children with your own childhood. Then discuss who had the greatest freedom, and who had the most fun. Support your opinion with explanations and examples.

Sample 1 (Approximate Level: "Honors Pass")

Score: 18 out of 20 (plus points from grammar test)

Text of Essay

[Comments refer to both regular text and blue highlighted phrases.]

Comments on Evaluation

I often ask my parents to tell me about their childhood and they love narrating funny stories or describing unusual situations. When they talk to me about those years, I feel like I see the past through their eyes. I think they were really happy as children.

*Nice introduction;
Establishes genre
appropriateness and point of
view skillfully and creatively*

I usually compare my parents' childhood with my own childhood. My parents or me had the greatest freedom? My parents or me had the most fun? I try to find out statements to support the right opinion.

*Rephrases and personalizes
task to frame/clarify
response*

Well, my parents had a great freedom. They often tell me so. They were playing out the whole day. They were running, laughing and not worrying. They were living in a village. The children from the whole village were a big company. They were playing all together without fighting and arguing all the time. Their parents were not worrying. They used to let their children play a lot of hours with freedom without being nervous or stressed about it. They knew their children were safe. Of course, those were difficult days with a lot of poor people and a lot of misery, but children lived in the world of happiness and freedom.

*States that parents had
freedom and provides
several sentences to support
that statement*

*Elaborates on the context of
the times—goes beyond
mere citing of examples, and
so exceeds minimal B2
standard*

My own childhood is not the same. I don't go out and play with the other children, because nowadays there is not a single child in the streets playing, as it used to happen at once, when the roads were full of children that were playing happily. Now, children have cell phones, televisions, computers and a lot of video games. The one does not need the company of the other, to play with. Children now grow up faster, as their parents transfer them their problems.

*Sets up contrast with first
sentence in paragraph;
provides rich description as
support*

I am not as free as my parents were, and I often ask them why they don't do to me the same thing as their parents did to them. They tell me they are afraid of this world's dangers. I wonder if I'll do the same thing to my own children. I've come up to the conclusion that my parents had the greatest freedom and the most fun.

*Concluding paragraph
includes explanation for why
parents had greater
freedom; refers back to
introduction*

Additional comments on evaluation

*multi-clausal sentences used effectively throughout essay

*few grammatical errors, and they don't impair understanding; relevant

*Message is easy to follow and ideas are arranged well; light and casual

Sample 2 (Approximate Level: "Narrow Fail")

Score: 8 out of 20 (plus points from grammar test)

Text of Essay

[Comments refer to both regular text and blue highlighted phrases.]

I asked my parents **for** their **childish age**. In the beggining both they laughed and they remembered very good times with their parents and their brothers.

Comments on Evaluation

Wrong preposition ("for" instead of "about");
vocabulary weak ("childish age" instead of "childhood");
but nice introduction.

First started my dad and **he** said to me that in **her** season the things were more difficult and he **came towards with very difficulties**. My dad he can be finished the elementary school but he was workin from when he was thirteen years old!!! **He** was helping **her** father in his job.

This paragraph contains father's response; gender confusion; lexical and grammatical failure; but father's hard life comes across

Then it has came the turn of my mother to tell me about **his** childish age. My mom is younger **that** my father and she didn't face so many difficulties as my father. She was living in a better house **that** my father she was eating little better than my father and that's all.

More gender confusion; "that" instead of "than";
Examples support opinion that mother's life was easier (but task was to compare parents' childhood to students' childhood)

Sample 3 (Approximate Level: “Marginal Pass” or “Clear Pass” depending on grammar score)

Score: 15 out of 20 (plus points from grammar test)

[Comments refer to both regular text and blue highlighted phrases.]

Most people think that nowadays a child’s **lifestyle has more fun** than the lifestyle of our parents. **Other have** a completely different opinion with that statement.

Children nowadays don’t have much free time. We have plenty of things to do. First of all, **We** have more homework to do for our studies than our parents had when they were young. We spent most of our time studying and not having fun with our friends. We have to do more activities and we have more responsibilities than our parent’s childhood. Sometime **we** waste our spare time watching TV or playing computer games which is completely **worthless**.

I think that our **parents childhood** had the greatest freedom. That’s because of the **decipline** that our grandparents gave them. They could count on them. But **nowdays** children are **cheeky** and **misbehaved** so our parents punish us and they don’t let us have so much freedom. Another reason is that when our parents were young, there were lots of green areas to go and play with their friends. Today, I’m afraid that there’s not much green for children to play, so they have to stay **in** home.

Finally, I believe that our parents had a better lifestyle when they were young than ours because they had more free time than we have and of course more freedom to play with their friends than us.

Comments on Evaluation

Possessive NP subject confusion; various syntactic forms (relative clauses, comparative sentences, subordination, coordination), but some of the sentence patterns are repetitive. Also a few grammatical errors (person shift from 3rd to 1st, preposition, possessive) Specific word choices. Modifiers (e. g. worthless, cheeky, misbehaved) are precise, but with some spelling errors.

The rest of these sentences support the leading statement that parents had more freedom, but sequencing of ideas and details is not effective or smooth.

Introduction and conclusion tie together. Generally appropriate for purpose and audience.

Sample 4 (Approximate Level: "Narrow Fail" unless grammar score is extremely high)

Score: 13 out of 20 (plus points from grammar test)

[Comments refer to both regular text and blue highlighted phrases.]

In my opinion, there are many differences between the lifestyle of my parents when they were children and my own childhood.

First of all, my parents were not able to ask from their parents **whatever can I ask from my parents** nowadays. They also couldn't do an activity because their parents hadn't enough money. In addition, I go to school and I believe that some of my important dreams will become true in future.

Moreover, I think that I have the opportunity to do things for myself. My parents hadn't the same opportunities. I go out with **my friends I go** on holidays. I spent a lot of time by doing my favorite hobbies. So in this way I have freedom and I feel very happy. I also have more fun than my parents had then.

On the other side, when my parents were children, they were usually going out to play with their friends **without be punished** about dangers.

To conclude, I think that my parents try to offer to me whatever they hadn't when they were younger especially **the freedom** and the fun.

Comments on Evaluation

Generally vocabulary use is adequate to convey meaning;

complex structure attempt is awkward "...whatever can I ask..."; Very unclear (not smooth) connection between sentences. Supporting ideas are present, but details don't contribute to the main idea.

Good control over simple sentence structures and also sign of attempting more complex sentences, but with some grammatical errors (word order in subordination, auxiliary verb, verb tense, and gerund after preposition); few examples to support opinions

There is a recognizable beginning and conclusion, but conclusion doesn't tie up the ideas.