

Formal Writing Example

There has never been a better time to be a teenager.

Imagine being told you could not be an engineer or a truck driver, or even an airline pilot because 'girls don't do those jobs'. Imagine being told not to listen to that radio station because 'Bad Boy Elvis' and rock and roll music encouraged indecent behaviour. Imagine putting on a tie or a hat and gloves to go out. These values and social conventions were generally accepted as 'correct' by parents of teenagers in the 1950s, and teenagers were not expected to question them. Before we complain about life in the 21st century we should look at how fortunate we are.

Career choices for girls in the 1950s were mostly limited to becoming a hairdresser, nurse, or teacher, until they married. This would be unthinkable today. Women are having children in their late 30s not early 20s, and often their families are planned around their careers. In co-educational schools girls often top the classes in Physics, Chemistry Technology, or Mathematics - traditionally seen as boys' subjects. When the army recruitment officer visits, as many girls as boys are in the audience. Achieving your potential is no longer limited by your gender, and this must be a good thing.

Another aspect of modern teenage life that reflects these immense social changes is in what is acceptable to wear. You might say that 'anything goes'. If you look at any group of teenagers wearing mufti you will see many different personal styles. One person has four or five body piercings, another has dreadlocked hair, the third shows off his boxers above his low-slung jeans; and the casual T-shirt and shorts outfit is worn everywhere. Tomorrow, why not choose a different look and reinvent your image? Express your individuality! These are some of the freedoms that teenagers enjoy today.

As for music - well a lot of our parents are into heavy metal so what's left for us? It's hard to be a rebel when your parents haven't stopped! Obviously the media has an influence on teenagers but feel we have the right to choose for ourselves - especially when many of us are taller than our parents by the age of 15, have our own 'wheels', our own money, and our own telephones.

Teenagers clearly need and want to be independent today - because the range of careers and the pace of technological change require fast and flexible thinkers. Surely this is better preparation life than when our grandparents grew up being told what to wear, do and think. Making the right choices is not always easy, but it is better than having your choices made for you! This is the most exciting, challenging and fun time to be a teenager ever.

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Read the example of a formal essay and then complete the following activities.

1. Write down the three main ideas that the writer mentions in the introduction.

2. Name two techniques the writer has used to emphasize the ideas in the introduction.

3. Write down the topic sentence from paragraph 3.

4. Write down one piece of evidence the writer uses to back up his point in Paragraph 2.

5. Write down a more formal expression for "are into" as used in the first sentence of paragraph 4.

6. Write out in full the words for the contractions "it's" and "haven't" as used in paragraph 4.
