

**Instruction:** Write two compositions of 500 words each to respond to each of the following passages. Your compositions can take any form you like, but do not use the original expressions or quote from the texts unless you have a good reason to do so. Your writings may be based on your personal observations and experiences as well as your reading knowledge. 50% each.

1. Noted journalist Norman Cousins, in "How to Make People Smaller Than They Are," argues that the modern focus on vocational education rather than on general education is dangerous in a democracy because it ignores history, language, literature, and philosophy--the liberal arts in general--and opts instead for "practical" business and computer courses. Cousins agrees with our Founding Fathers that a free society is absolutely dependent on a thinking citizenry. Universities that simply provide job training are failing in their duty to teach the underlying philosophy of our government, to expose students to debates about the principles and ethics that determine a free society, in other words, to prepare them for democracy. Cousins points out that Thomas Jefferson was "prouder of having been the founder of the University of Virginia than of having been President of the United States," because he understood that a system based on the "informed consent of the governed" can only work when the governed are educated, their minds developed, their values tested. In other words, an educational system which provides citizens with a broad general education is necessary for the survival of democracy. (Andrew Macdonald and Gina Macdonald. *Mastering Writing Essentials*, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1996, p. 379)
2. The term "political correctness" refers to the views of those opposed to speech that smacks of racism, sexism, ageism, or other "isms" potentially demeaning to selected groups. In their efforts to make American culture more inclusive and to eradicate discrimination, for instance, feminists, blacks, Hispanics, Asians, gays and lesbians, disabled persons, and similar groups object to language that excludes, belittles, or demeans them. Their attempts to monitor both written and spoken words have led some people to criticize them for being overly sensitive and extreme in their recommendations for change. The controversy has engendered much heated debate between those in favor of politically correct language and their critics, who find the need for the designation silly and even obnoxious. (*Essays from Contemporary Culture*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., ed. Katherine Anne Ackley, New York: Harcourt, 1998, p. 365)