

NEWS BREAK

Article: **Students outsource essays to struggling writers overseas**

Section: **MAIN, A1**

Sunday's News Break selects an article from **Sunday, September 8, 2019**, of The Seattle Times print replica for an in-depth reading of the news. Read the selected article and answer the attached study questions.

You are encouraged to modify this lesson to fit the needs of your students. For example, some classrooms may be able to use this as a worksheet and others might need to ask and answer the questions in a small group or larger, class discussion.

**Please be sure to preview all NIE content before using it in your classroom to ensure it is appropriate for all of your students.*

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1

- Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.2

- Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

Objectives:

Students will discuss how “contract cheating” is wrong and why. They’ll discuss why millions of American college students are turning to this system. Students will talk about whether those typing the papers in foreign countries have a choice and what they might do in a similar situation. They’ll discuss whether this type of cheating undermines the integrity of American colleges and universities, diplomas and degrees and what can be done to stop it?

Pre-Reading Discussion:



- What do you think the article will be about?
- Are there clues in the picture?
- What can you infer?

Vocabulary Building:

Read this sentence, what do you think the highlighted words mean using *context clues*? A **context clue** is a word or words that are hints and refers to the sources of information outside of words that readers may use to predict the identities and meanings of unknown words.

“When such websites first emerged over a decade ago, they featured veiled references to tutoring and editing services, said Bertram Gallant, who also is a board member of the International Center for Academic Integrity, which has worked to highlight the danger of contract cheating. Now the sites are **blatant**.”

Write your guess and then look up the definition and write it below your guess. How close did you come to the correct definition?

Blatant Guess:

Blatant Definition:

Comprehension Questions:

1. Mary Mbugua works on a paper for a client from her home in Kenya. This type of _____ — students who pay others to write their papers — has expanded with the internet.
2. A friend offered to help her break into “academic writing.” What industry is this in Kenya?
3. Cheating in college is nothing new, but the internet makes it possible on a _____, _____ scale.

4. Although such businesses have existed for more than a decade, experts say demand has grown in recent years as the sites have become more sophisticated, with customer service hotlines and money back guarantees. What is the result?
5. It is not clear how widely used are sites for paid-to-order essays, known as “contract cheating” in higher-education circles. A 2005 study of students in North America found that _____% of undergraduates admitted to turning in papers written by someone else, while 3% admitted to obtaining essays from essay mills. Cath Ellis, a leading researcher on the topic, said millions of essays are ordered online every year worldwide.
6. The essay-for-hire industry has expanded significantly in developing countries. Why?
7. After a month of training, Mbugua began producing essays about everything from whether humans should colonize space (“it is not worth the struggle,” she wrote) to euthanasia (it amounts to taking “the place of God,” she wrote). During her best month, she earned \$_____, more money than she had ever made in her life.
8. “You can relax knowing that our reliable, expert writers will produce you a top quality and 100% plagiarism free essay that is written just for you, while you take care of the more interesting aspects of student life,” reads the pitch from Academized, which charges about \$____ a page for a college freshman’s essay due in two weeks and \$____ a page for an essay due in three hours.
9. In Kenya, a country with a per capita annual income of about \$1,700, successful writers can earn as much as \$_____ a month, according to Roynorris Ndiritu, who said he has thrived while writing academic essays for others.

Discussion Questions (small/large groups), Journal Prompts or Essay Questions:

- Do you believe that “contract cheating” is wrong? Why?
- Did you know this was happening before reading this article?
- Why do you think so many American college students are paying others to write their assignments?
- Does it surprise you to know millions of essays are ordered online, every year from schools in the United States? Why or why not?

“This is cheating,” she said. “But do you have a choice? We have to make money. We have to make a living.”

- Do those typing the essays have a choice?
- What would you do in a situation like this, where there is not many job opportunities making that kind of money in their countries?

Loller said he had worked with some colleges that have students who have never shown up for class or completed a single assignment. “They’ve contracted it all out,” he said.

- How does this type of cheating undermine the integrity of American colleges and universities, diplomas and degrees?
- Would you want to see a doctor who’s cheated their way through school? Why or why not?
- What can be done to stop it?

News Break is posted to the Web on Monday. Please share this NIE News Break program with other teachers. To sign-up for the print replica for your class, please [register on-line](#) or call 206/652-6290 or toll-free 1-888/775-2655.
Copyright © 2019 The Seattle Times Company