

Model Lesson: Reading and Understanding Prompts

First, I am going to carefully read the entire prompt from “The Whole Family Under One Roof?”

Read aloud the entire prompt.

“If you’re like many Americans, you have just spent a few days in close quarters with your parents, grandchildren, siblings, etc. You’re ready to go home, or ready for them to go home. But for a growing number of families in which adult children can’t afford to live on their own, this is the new normal.

“These ‘boomerang’ children have been the butt of jokes on late-night television and even in commercials, but what’s so bad about moving back in with your parents? Could extended families under one roof—a common arrangement in years past—be the way of the future?”

Now, I am going to reread the prompt one sentence at a time.

Reread the first sentence.

The first sentence reads: “If you’re like many Americans, you have just spent a few days in close quarters with your parents, grandchildren, siblings, etc.”

Think aloud.

I think this is just an introductory generalization. It states that many Americans have just spent a few days during the holidays with family members/relatives who don’t live with them. I am going to circle the words *close quarters*. I think the word *quarters* refers to a place where people live, such as a house or apartment. The author describes the quarters as being close. I wonder if this means close together? Maybe it means that the place seems small when so many people are inside. This makes sense! I think that I need to read the next sentence to get more information to understand why this is important.

Reread the second sentence.

The second sentence states: “You’re ready to go home, or ready for them to go home.”

Think aloud.

This sentence is easy to understand and seems to be related to the first sentence. I am not sure if either sentence contains key information about the topic. I do think these two sentences are saying that spending time in close quarters with relatives is something that most Americans can only tolerate for a brief period of time.

Reread the third sentence.

“But for a growing number of families in which adult children can’t afford to live on their own, this is the new normal.”

Think aloud.

I think this sentence presents another view of families sharing close quarters. Although I am not sure what the two words *new normal* mean. I am going to circle these two words. I am going to try and figure out what these words mean in relation to the first two sentences. I do know what *new* means and what *normal* means. I think that the “old” mindset described in the first two sentences about families coming together and sharing close quarters must be changing. It appears that in today’s society, families who have adult children who can’t afford to live on their own are becoming more common and accepted (the new normal). Maybe the topic of the essay is children living with their parents. I need to keep reading to be sure.

Reread the fourth sentence.

“These ‘boomerang’ children have been the butt of jokes on late-night television and even in commercials, but what’s so bad about moving back in with your parents?”

Think aloud.

First, I am going to highlight this question. But I don’t see any key words that give me clues to the purpose of the essay. This may not be the question I am supposed to answer in my essay. I am confused by the term *boomerang* as it is used to describe children. I know that a boomerang is a weapon from Australia that is curved or designed to return to the person who throws it. But why would you describe children as boomerangs? Oh, I think I understand now. It probably means that some children who have left home are coming back home to live.

The first part of the question is stating that society is making fun of this new trend. The second part of the question seems to be asking me to consider why it would be so bad to move back in with your parents. I wonder if that is what I am supposed to write about. That would be an interesting topic. I need to read the last sentence before I will know for sure.

Reread the last sentence.

“Could extended families under one roof—a common arrangement in years past—be the way of the future?”

Think aloud.

I will highlight this sentence, too. I think the first part of the sentence is summing up the main topic discussed in the first paragraph. It mentions extended families under one roof. I am going to circle the words *extended families* because I am not sure what *extended* means in this context. I know that when something is extended it becomes longer. I am going to look *extended* up in the dictionary.

Here it is: *Extended* also means “to make larger.” So, an extended family would be a family that is made larger when children or other relatives move in.

The sentence also says that extended families were common in the past. It must have been a long time ago, because I only know of two of my classmates who have their older siblings or grandparents living with them. I think this part of the sentence, *a common arrangement in years past*, is suggesting that extended families may once again become a widespread and common occurrence in today’s society.

I am also going to circle *the way of the future*. But I think that this is just another way to say that extended families will become the “new normal.”

I am certain that this last question specifies the topic of the essay. I can also determine that the purpose of the essay is to explain my position on the topic of whether extended families living under one roof will or will not become a widespread and common living arrangement in our future society.

I didn’t see any writing logistics or key words in either of the paragraphs. The audience is not specified either.

REFERENCE: Prompt adapted from *The New York Times*, 2011.