

GED 2014 RLA Extended Response Prompt

Reasoning through Language Arts Extended Response Prompt: Analyzing Vegetarianism and Meat Eating

Many proponents of vegetarianism say that eating meat harms health. They often argue that killing animals for food is cruel and unethical since non-animal food sources are plentiful. However, opponents of a vegetarian diet say that meat consumption is healthful and humane.

Eat No Meat

I grew up on a farm and saw many “pets” slaughtered for food. Just like Fern Arable in Charlotte’s Web by E.B. White, I wanted to save them all just like she saved Wilbur. I could not, so instead I have chosen not to eat any meat ever again.

Besides the offensive idea of eating a “friend,” completely eliminating meat and animal products has great health benefits. Although different meats have varying amounts of fat, they all contain about the same amount of cholesterol. In addition, diets high in animal protein are associated with high blood cholesterol, thereby raising the risk of heart disease.

All animal products contain considerably more concentrated levels of pesticide residue than either vegetables or grains. Like red meat, poultry and fish contain no beneficial carbohydrates, fiber, or phytochemicals.

Fish contain substantially more heavy metals (such as lead, mercury, and cadmium) and industrial pollutants (such as PCBs, DDT and dioxins) than land animals. In the United States alone, about 10 billion animals are killed each year to be turned into meat. This translates into about 34 animals per person that are needlessly killed each year to appease the human appetite. Conditions on factory farms and at slaughterhouses are deplorable. Most farm animals live in cramped, filthy quarters that do not allow for even the most basic needs such as fresh air, sunshine, sanitary conditions, unrestrained movement, natural mating, suckling offspring, or developing normal social behaviors.

There is a common misconception that vegetarians have a limited array of food choices. Just the opposite is true. Vegetarians commonly eat a wider variety of foods than most meat eaters .

Eat Meat

Eating meat is not cruel or unethical; it is a natural part of the cycle of life. Vegetarians mistakenly elevate the value of animal life over plant life. Research by Cleve Backster shows that plants respond electrochemically to threats and may feel fear. Therefore vegetarians also cause harm every time they kill and eat a plant. Every organism on earth dies or is killed, at some point, so others organisms can live. There is nothing wrong with this cycle; it is how nature works.

Eating meat contributes to healthy nutrition. Meat is the most convenient protein source available. In one serving, meat provides all the essential amino acids (the building blocks of protein), as well as essential nutrients such as iron, zinc, and B vitamins. Most plant foods do not provide adequate levels of all the essential amino acids in a single serving.

Eating meat provides healthy saturated fats, which enhance the function of the immune and nervous systems. Saturated fats contain the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K and the cholesterol from saturated animal fat is needed for the proper function of serotonin receptors in the brain. According to a Feb. 7, 2014 study by researchers at the Institute of Social Medicine and Epidemiology, vegetarians "suffer significantly more often from anxiety disorder and/or depression." Low cholesterol levels have been linked to depression. Saturated fats are also essential for building and maintaining cell health, and help the body absorb calcium.

Meat is the best source of vitamin B12, a vitamin necessary to nervous and digestive system health. Although it is also found in eggs and dairy, a July 2003 study showed two in three vegetarians were vitamin B12 deficient compared to one in 20 meat eaters.

Eating meat provides a better source of iron than a vegetarian diet. The body absorbs 15% to 35% of the heme iron in meat, but only absorbs 2% to 20% of the non-heme iron found in vegetarian sources like leafy greens and beans.

Prompt

The article presents arguments from both supporters and critics of a vegetarian diet who disagree about the cruelty of killing animals and the health benefits of eating meat.

In your response, analyze both positions presented in the article to determine which one is best supported. Use relevant and specific evidence from the article to support your response.