

**Question:** Music often plays an important role in our lives no matter whether our tastes are classical, country, jazz, rock, or rhythm 'n blues. This music may merely be in the background when we drive or study, provide a refuge from our problems, offer a trigger for our memories, or be an integral part of our lives, memories, and culture. **Write an essay of approximately two pages in which you explain the role that music plays or has played in your life.**

(Untitled)

Music, for me, has always been a release. I may be stressed about school or work, but most commonly it is financial problems I like to escape from. No matter what the situation music always calms me down. Listening to my favorite band or song is a sure way to get me into a better mood. Playing my guitar is more of my way to escape.

Since I can remember music has always been a big part of my life. Rock and metal have been my most favorite genres throughout the years. Most people may find it hard to believe that Metal can relax someone but the guitar harmonies and solos that are so prevalent in the music I listen to just cause me to get lost in the song. Whether it be in the car riding around or at home just relaxing any of my friends will vouch for the fact that if a song I like is on then there is nothing else that matters for that five or six minutes.

Actually playing the guitar is an excellent way for me to leave my troubles behind. I like to envision myself onstage performing for a huge crowd with all eyes on me. Nothing else seems to exist. I get so caught up in making up the new parts for a song or revising old ones that I might as well be in a different world.

I know music will always be important in my life. Unless I lose a hand or get arthritis so bad I can't move my hand I will always find time to play my guitar. As long as I continue to get stressed, which I inevitably will, I'll continue to listen to music and find my way into another world.

#### Commentary

**Strengths:** The writer addresses the question, and the essay stays on topic. The writer uses paragraphing effectively to separate points, with one paragraph devoted to the idea that music helps him relax and one paragraph about playing the guitar. Sentence structure is varied effectively, demonstrating an admirable facility (e.g., "As long as I continue to get stressed, which I inevitably will, I'll continue to listen to music and find my way into another world."). There are no serious errors in spelling, punctuation, or grammar. However, the essay was scored "3" (non-mastery) because of its weaknesses.

**Weaknesses:** The focus, though apparent, is weak. The introduction suggests that the writer will discuss how music helps him relieve the stress of financial problems, but financial problems are not mentioned in the body of the essay. Development is shallow, with no concrete details. The writer does not provide any specific examples to illustrate his ideas. Instead of giving concrete examples, he writes in general terms throughout. The closest he comes to describing a concrete situation is his referring to being "in the car riding around or at home." He repeats the same thought in each paragraph: he "[gets] lost in the song" and "there is nothing else that matters" (paragraph 2) and "Nothing else seems to exist" and "[he] might as well be in a different world" (paragraph 3). Although there are no serious problems in correctness, the writer has misspelled "genres" as "generas" and "whether" as "wheather."