

**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)

When I was younger listening to music always made me feel weird. It was just something about it that made me feel uneasy. As I got older I started to understand that music was suppose to make me feel that way. I can say that music has played many different roles in my life. The three major roles that music have played in my life are focus, motivation, and understanding.

I found music to be a good tool to help me focus. Cool jazz is a type of music that I listen to that clears my head. It lets me focus on one thing and forget about the stuff that dosen't matter. Sometimes I listen to this type of music while I study. When I do, I find myself lost in what ever it is that I'm doing. It's kind of cool that cool jazz can make me feel this way.

I have also found music to be very motivating. Before my football games in high school we use to listen rap music in the lockerroom while we got dressed. There was something in those lyrics that made me want to go out and crush my opponent. No matter wether I was feeling happy, sad, tired, or lazy. It was something about that music and the atmosphere that motivated me to go out on the field and give every thing I got.

The last thing that music does is give me a sense of understanding. There are certain things that life throw at you that make you want to breakdown. Someone could be rejected by the love of their life and feel like they can't move on. The one time that it happened to me I was devastated. I couldn't eat or sleep and it seemed like every little thing reminded me of her. Believe it or not it was a song that helped me.

#### Commentary

**Strengths:** *The essay is effectively focused and organized. The writer states his main idea (thesis) at the end of the introductory paragraph, and this statement also predicts the organization of the body: "The three major roles that music [has] played in my life are focus, motivation, and understanding." The writer organizes the material in three separate paragraphs, one for each of the three roles. He develops the points adequately, explaining that "cool jazz" helps him focus when studying, that music motivated him before a football game to "go out on the field and give everything [he had]," and that music increased his understanding, the example being of a time he was "rejected by the love of [his] life." The style is clear, and coherence is achieved as each body paragraph begins in a way that emphasizes the point's connection to the whole: "I found music to be a good tool to help me focus. . . . I have also found music to be motivating. . . . The last thing that music does is give me a sense of understanding." The essay is easy to follow and could be easily outlined. In summary, the essay has adequate focus, organization, development, and style.*

**Weaknesses:** *Development would be improved if the writer had been more specific when explaining his points. Exactly what jazz does he listen to when he studies? When is the most recent time he listened to jazz while studying? What exactly was the rap music that his football team listened to while dressing before the game? What was the song that helped him deal with his being rejected by his girlfriend? What were the words that helped him cope? Readers like details, and development is important in achieving a high score. In addition, the essay has a number of technical errors. Some are minor (e.g., suppose to for supposed to, dosen't matterfor doesn't matter, wether for whether), but others, in subject-verb agreement, are more serious: the roles music have played for the roles music has played and things that life throw forthings that life throws. The lack of detailed development and the problems in correctness, the subject-verb errors in particular, keep this essay below the "5" level. In fact, the essay was scored a "4."*