Should children be prohibited from becoming actors at an early age?

GETTING ORIENTED

The weekly passage covers issues related to children participating in the entertainment industry. Here is some information that might be helpful to students less familiar with the topic.

Child Labor

Young children have worked throughout history to help their families have more money to live. Historically, in America, many children worked on farms from early morning hours until late at night. When America became more industrialized with factories and businesses, children worked all sorts of jobs. Some states passed laws to protect children under the ages of 14 or 15, but it was not until 1938 that a federal regulation or law was passed requiring all states to have a minimum age and limited hours of work for young children.

Reality TV Shows

In the past, most TV programs were fictional or not real. Actors played characters and followed a script. There were also games shows where real people competed for prizes. Fictional TV programs were typically on in the evening, and game shows were on in the morning and afternoon. In the last 15 years, a new kind of TV show has become popular where real people are featured. These people are sometimes competing, but many times they are just doing something that audiences find humorous or entertaining. MTV’s The Real World and CBS’s Survivor are a couple of the first reality TV shows to become popular.

Child Actors

Many TV shows and movies are about families and have characters that are children. Because of this, there are many child actors who have to work long hours in order to film a show. Sometimes, these actors become so popular that they are not able to have a normal life. Child actors are an exception to some laws that restrict the age and hours for child labor. However, there are laws that require these young actors to go to school and prevent them from filming late at night. In one popular TV show from the 1980s and 1990s, one young character was played by two twin sisters, Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen. This allowed the sisters to split the hours they needed to work.

Beauty Pageants

In a beauty pageant, women compete against each other to see who is the most beautiful and talented woman in the contest. Sometimes, the contestants also answer questions about important events happening in the world. Participation in pageants can begin at a very young age. Sometimes, parents receive criticism for entering their children in pageants, especially when young girls are wearing a lot of makeup and other things to enhance their beauty. The reality television show Toddlers & Tiaras showcases children’s beauty pageants.
## Should children be prohibited from becoming actors at an early age?

### EVIDENCE AND PERSPECTIVES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Some may have this view:</th>
<th>But others may think:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parents</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Many parents think they should get to make their own decisions about whether or not their child should become an actor. They think that parents know what is best for their kids and don’t want the government to interfere with their decisions. They may think that children should have the right to show off their talent if they want to. They do not want their children to miss an opportunity for success.</td>
<td>Other parents may feel that it is too dangerous for kids to become actors, even though they also want their children to be successful. They worry that others parents might not consider potential dangers because of their focus on success and fame. They may think that the government should step in and protect children against what they see as something too risky.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Television Viewers</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Television viewers may think that child actors are too important in the shows they like to watch. They point out that these shows entertain millions of people and that stories about families would be impossible without child actors. They may feel that these kids are lucky to have careers as actors and that children and parents understand the risks.</td>
<td>Other television viewers might think that good shows could be made without child actors. They may not watch shows with a lot of child characters and would not mind if all actors had to be older. These viewers might believe that the risks to children are not worth it and that people will still be entertained with shows that don’t include young children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers and Coaches</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers and coaches may want kids to see other children doing extraordinary things. They want kids to have role models to look up to. They want the public to see that kids have tremendous potential, and they support programs that will allow all kids the opportunity to learn to dance or sing like the kids on TV programs.</td>
<td>Other teachers and coaches may feel that kids as actors sends the wrong message to children that it’s easy to be famous. They think that kids might see other children being successful and not recognize all the hard work and luck behind their successes. They might worry that children will focus on being famous and not work hard towards a more likely career.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Additional Information

- The first state to pass a child labor law was in Massachusetts in 1836. The law required factory workers under the age of 15 to attend school at least 3 months of each year.

- The Coogan Law requires that a portion of the money a child actor earns be set aside for the child and cannot be used by the parents.

- Acting jobs pay about $17.49 per hour, and the work is usually irregular. Few actors work full time.

- According to a 2011 survey, girls who watch reality TV are more likely to aspire to a leadership role than those who don’t and are more likely to see themselves as role models. Girls who watch reality TV also spend more time on their appearance than those who don’t watch reality TV.

- The reality TV show *Kid Nation*, which featured 40 children living in a world with little adult supervision, was canceled after one season. There were five serious injuries while taping the show.

- Child Actor Laws [https://www.sagaftra.org/membership-benefits/young-performers/coogan-law](https://www.sagaftra.org/membership-benefits/young-performers/coogan-law)


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ANNOTATIONS FOR TEACHERS

Features of Academic Text: Signal words

Some child actors become successful adults, but many end up confronting drug and alcohol addictions, eating disorders, and criminal behavior. As they grow older, child actors are judged by the media and by people they’ve never met, a problem made worse by the anonymity the internet offers. Perez Hilton, who has a website devoted to insulting celebrities, mercilessly attacked child actors like Lindsey Lohan, Justin Bieber, and Amanda Bynes, all of whom have had problems with managing fame and fortune. Furthermore, Hilton’s scathing observations often bring on hundreds more negative and distressing comments about the celebrities he targets. Internet “trolls” often compete to see who can leave the meanest and most hurtful criticisms. Stardom can bring money and fame, but all too often physical, mental, and emotional problems emerge as well. What explains these negative effects of early celebrity?

Some experts say that becoming a celebrity at an early age can interfere with a young person’s normal emotional and physical growth. Many children who are pushed into acting or modeling or appearing in pageants at a very early age are being exploited by their parents. The children may have little control over their careers. Young celebrities often don’t develop the skills needed to become successful adults. Many never learn to do everyday things like make their beds or cook their own meals or interact with others as equals. Young celebrities make huge amounts of money, get lots of attention, and are exposed to drugs, alcohol, and sex at an early age. This combination, some experts argue, is potentially disastrous for a developing child.

But some child actors turn out just fine. Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Natalie Portman, and Emma Watson seem to be happy and well-adjusted adults. They acted as children, and continued acting while going to college. Now they are successful adults with flourishing careers. Sometimes child actors develop insights about Hollywood that help them emerge as leaders of the industry. For example, Ron Howard, the director of The Da Vinci Code and many other box office hits, started off as a child actor.

So what do you think? Should children be prohibited from modeling, acting, and participating in pageants until they are old enough to make their own decisions about their careers? Should their parents be allowed to make the decision about whether their children perform?

Writers of academic texts are required to elaborate. If the purpose of the article is for readers to understand both sides of the issue, examples and additional reasons must be provided.

A good writer will help his reader to notice these examples and reasons by providing signal words.

Here are some of the signal words that the writer uses in this passage:

- Furthermore
- For example

What are some other signal words that a writer can use for “furthermore”?

- Additionally
- Moreover
- In addition to this


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GENERATING WORDS
Changing Verbs to Nouns by adding suffixes -ation or -ence

This week’s focus words included four verbs, or action words.

- to confront – to face, especially in challenge
- to interfere – to get in the way of
- to emerge – to become known
- to exploit – to make use of, often unfairly

Each of these verbs becomes a noun when we add the suffix -ation or -ence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>confront</td>
<td>confrontation</td>
<td>(a confrontation happens when people are asked to talk about something that is hard to talk about or controversial)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exploit</td>
<td>exploitation</td>
<td>(using someone or something in an unfair way)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emerge</td>
<td>emergence</td>
<td>(an event or series of events where someone or something becomes known)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Below are examples of how the verbs to emerge and to exploit could have been used as nouns in the passage. The writers could have used the nouns emergence and exploitation, instead. Complete the last one yourself, showing how to confront could have been used as a noun.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb (from the passage)</th>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stardom can bring money and fame, but all too often physical, mental, and emotional problems emerge as well.</td>
<td>The emergence of physical, mental, and emotional problems can be brought on by stardom.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many children who are pushed into acting or modeling or appearing in pageants at a very early age are being exploited by their parents.</td>
<td>Exploitation of children can occur when parents push their children into acting or modeling or appearing in pageants at a very early age.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some child actors become successful adults, but many end up confronting drug and alcohol addictions, eating disorders, and criminal behavior.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Change the following verbs into nouns by adding -ation or -ence. Then write a sentence that uses the noun. Try to write a sentence that the author could have used in the weekly passage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verb</th>
<th>noun</th>
<th>sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to interfere</td>
<td>interference</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to participate</td>
<td>participation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to determine</td>
<td>determination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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DEVELOPING DISCUSSIONS

Persuasion Balance

People on both sides of a controversial issue can always find good reasons and evidence to support their opinions. If that weren't the case, the issue wouldn't be considered controversial. But some reasons and evidence will "weigh" more. In class discussions, we want to be sure to explore both sides. Then we choose to defend the side of the issue that seems to have reasons and evidence that carry more "weight," or significance. This weight will be different for every person because we value different things. This is called a person's persuasion balance.

On the lines below, brainstorm reasons and evidence for both sides of the issue: Should children be prohibited from becoming actors at an early age?

### Reasons and Evidence for My Position

1. 

2. 

3. 

### Reasons and Evidence for the Opposing Position

1. 

2. 

3. 

Academic Conversation:

Explain your persuasion balance to your partner. Why did you think some reasons and evidence had more weight than others? Why did one side weigh more than the other for you? When your partner has a turn, ask your partner to elaborate if you need them to be more clear about their persuasion balance.

Words and Phrases You Might Use

- "I believe that ______.”
- "This evidence weighs more for me because ______.”
- "I think this is less important due to ______.”
- "While ______ is a good reason, I think that ______ is more convincing because ______.”
- "Overall, I think the argument that ______ carries more weight because ______.”
- "Some people would argue that ______, but I think they should consider ______.”