**Sample paragraphs - what grade levels would YOU put these into?**

“This innocent country set you down in a ghetto in which, in fact, it intended that you should perish. Let me spell out precisely what I mean by that for the heart of the matter is here and the crux of my dispute with my country. You were born where you were born and faced the future that you faced because you were black and for no other reason. The limits to your ambition were thus expected to be settled. You were born into a society which spelled out with brutal clarity and in as many ways as possible that you were a worthless human being. You were not expected to aspire to excellence. You were expected to make peace with mediocrity. Wherever you have turned, James, in your short time on this earth, you have been told where you could go and what you could do and how you could do it, where you could live and whom you could marry.”

***(James Baldwin “A Letter to My Nephew”)*** [***http://progressive.org/archive/1962/december/letter***](http://progressive.org/archive/1962/december/letter)

***“*** It was a queer sort of place -- a gable-ended old house, one side palsied as it were, and leaning over sadly. It stood on a sharp bleak corner, where that tempestuous wind Euroclydon kept up a worse howling than ever it did about poor Paul's tossed craft. Euroclydon, nevertheless, is a mighty pleasant zephyr to any one in-doors, with his feet on the hob quietly toasting for bed. 'In judging of that tempestuous wind called Euroclydon,' says an old writer -- of whose works I possess the only copy extant -- 'it maketh a marvellous difference, whether thou lookest out at it from a glass window where the frost is all on the outside, or whether thou observest it from that sashless window, where the frost is on both sides, and of which the wight Death is the only glazier.' True enough, thought I, as this passage occurred to my mind -- old black-letter, thou reasonest well. Yes, these eyes are windows, and this body of mine is the house. What a pity they didn't stop up the chinks and the crannies though, and thrust in a little lint here and there. But it's too late to make any improvements now. The universe is finished; the copestone is on, and the chips were carted off a million years ago. Poor Lazarus there, chattering his teeth against the curbstone for his pillow, and shaking off his tatters with his shiverings, he might plug up both ears with rags, and put a corn-cob into his mouth, and yet that would not keep out the tempestuous Euroclydon. Euroclydon! says old Dives, in his red silken wrapper -- (he had a redder one afterwards) pooh, pooh! What a fine frosty night; how Orion glitters; what northern lights! Let them talk of their oriental summer climes of everlasting conservatories; give me the privilege of making my own summer with my own coals.”

**(Melville, Herman, 1819-1891. *Moby-Dick, or, The Whale*)**  
Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library

<http://web.archive.org/web/20030110102231/http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/etcbin/toccer-new2?id=Mel2Mob.sgm&images=images/modeng&data=/texts/english/modeng/parsed&tag=public&part=2&division=div1>

“You're probably wondering, since we can't use logic, and we can't argue and we can't define, just how are we going to come up with an answer? Well, if you were me, you wouldn't worry. But you're just about two legs shy of being me. So I suggest you do what I do: One evening, munch down a nice bale of hay and a few oats. Take off your blinders and stand out in a big open field, and cock your head back and stare up at the stars. You will know that there is a God. Then, one day when things are not going your way, stop and consider the same question. You will know that there is no God. For a horse, two contradictory ideas can both be true at the same moment. This is what separates you from me. It is why the horse didn't invent the computer but did invent — and not a lot of people know this — the sofa. Once you allow impossible ideas to coexist in your brain, you are on your way to being a very fine beast of burden. Here's a little horse sense of my own: whatever answer you choose at any given moment is the correct one. And if some tight-lipped, close-cropped, neat little know-it-all challenges you, just tell them that you learned it from Toby the talking horse.”

**“Does God Exist?” Steve Martin***The New Yorker* in 1998. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/questionofgod/voices/martin.html>

“Many heterosexual black men in white supremacist patriarchal culture have acted as though the primary "evil" of racism has been the refusal of the dominant culture to allow them full access to patriarchal power, so that in sexist terms they are compelled to inhabit a sphere of powerless ness, deemed "feminine," hence they have perceived themselves as emasculated. To the extent that black men accept a white supremacist sexist representation of themselves as castrated, without phallic power, and therefore pseudo-females, they will need to overly assert a phallic misogynist masculinity, one rooted in contempt for the female. Much black male homophobia is rooted in the desire to eschew connection with all things deemed "feminine" and that would, of course, include black gay men. A contemporary black comedian like Eddie Murphy "proves" his phallic power by daring to publicly ridicule women and gays. His days of appearing in drag are over. Indeed it is the drag queen of his misogynist imagination that is most often the image of black gay culture he evokes and subjects to comic homophobic assault—one that audiences collude in perpetuating.”

bell hooks, “Is Paris Burning” chapter 9 in *Black Looks: Race and Representation*

<http://stjsociologyofgender.files.wordpress.com/2010/09/paris_burning_bell_hooks.pdf>

“That Hippias was the eldest son and succeeded to the government, is what I positively assert as a fact upon which I have had more exact accounts than others, and may be also ascertained by the following circumstance. He is the only one of the legitimate brothers that appears to have had children; as the altar shows, and the pillar placed in the Athenian Acropolis, commemorating the crime of the tyrants, which mentions no child of Thessalus or of Hipparchus, but five of Hippias, which he had by Myrrhine, daughter of Callias, son of Hyperechides; and naturally the eldest would have married first. Again, his name comes first on the pillar after that of his father; and this too is quite natural, as he was the eldest after him, and the reigning tyrant. Nor can I ever believe that Hippias would have obtained the tyranny so easily, if Hipparchus had been in power when he was killed, and he, Hippias, had had to establish himself upon the same day; but he had no doubt been long accustomed to overawe the citizens, and to be obeyed by his mercenaries, and thus not only conquered, but conquered with ease, without experiencing any of the embarrassment of a younger brother unused to the exercise of authority. It was the sad fate which made Hipparchus famous that got him also the credit with posterity of having been tyrant.”

Thucydides: On Aristogeiton and Harmodius, from *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, 6th. Book

***Written ca. 431 B.C.*** ***Translated by Richard Crawley***

“That the fundamental error of the whole structure of legislation and custom, whereby women are practically sustained, even in this republic, is the preposterous fiction of law, that in the eye of the law the husband and wife are one person, that person being the husband; that this falsehood itself, the deposit of barbarism, tends perpetually to brutalize the marriage relation by subjecting wives as irresponsible tools to the capricious authority of husbands; that this degradation of married women re-acts inevitably to depress the condition of single women, by impairing their own self-respect and man's respect for them; and that the final result is that system of tutelage miscalled protection, by which the industry of women is kept on half-pay, their affections trifled with, their energies crippled, and even their noblest aspirations wasted away in vain efforts, ennui, and regret.”

*Woman's Rights Petition to the New York Legislature*, 1854

<http://eweb.furman.edu/~benson/docs/w-rights1.htm>