

## ENC 1101 DIAGNOSTIC

### SMALL READING AND IN CLASS ESSAY

*Please read the article below then answer the prompt that follows it. Please remember to discuss the answer with appropriate grammar, language, descriptions, and details. Remember, this diagnostic is not graded, but will be looked over carefully to ensure that you are placed in the appropriate class. Results of this essay will be discussed in a forthcoming class.*

The following is an article by Timothy Egan on the *New York Times* Editorial page titled “Guns and the Two Americas.” This article was published on July 31, 2015:

The waves of mass shootings continue to roll over the United States like surf on the ship of state’s prow. Every few weeks now we get hit with a jolt of cold water. We shake and shudder, and then brace ourselves for the next one.

So we beat on — a nation whose people are 20 times more likely to die of gun violence than those of most other developed countries. The only thing extraordinary about mass shootings in America is how ordinary the killing grounds are — elementary schools, high schools, colleges, military recruitment centers, theaters, parks, churches.

Is no place safe? Actually, several places are. You want protection in a country that allows a deranged man to get an assault weapon to hunt down innocent people in a public space? Go to the airport — that bubble of gun-free security. Or go to a major-league baseball game, or a stadium in the National Football League.

Nationwide, if you want to lessen your chances of getting shot, stay out of the South. The South is the most violent region in the United States, and also the place with the highest rate of gun ownership. More guns, easily obtained by the mentally ill, religious fanatics and anti-government extremists, mean more gun deaths.

Better to go to a city or state with gun restrictions, at least if you’re playing the odds. Most of the states with tighter gun laws have fewer gun deaths. That’s one America, the slightly safer one. It includes government gun-screened zones like airports, courthouses and many high schools. But more significantly, it also covers property used by our most popular obsession, pro football — the free market at work.

The other America is an open-fire zone, backed by politicians who think it should be even more crowded with average people parading around with lethal weapons. Just after the tragedy in a Louisiana theater a week ago — a shooting by a hate-filled man who was able to legally obtain a gun despite a history of mental illness — Rick Perry called gun-free zones a bad idea.

In his view, echoing that of the fanatics who own the Republican Party by intimidation, everyone should be armed, everywhere. Once a shooting starts, the bad guy with the gun will be killed by the good guy with the gun, somehow able to get a draw on the shooter in a darkened theater, or

behind a pew in church. This scenario almost never happens. The logic is nonsense, the odds of a perfectly timed counter-killer getting the drop on the evil killer unlikely. And even when such a situation does happen, as in the Tucson shooting of 2011, the armed citizen who jumps into the melee can pose a mortal threat to others. In Tucson, an innocent person came within seconds of getting shot by an armed bystander who wasn't sure whom to shoot.

The Mall of America — more than 500 stores in four miles of retail space, drawing 40 million annual visitors to a climate-controlled part of Minnesota — is trying to be a gun-free zone. “Guns are banned on these premises” is the mall’s official policy. If the mall took up Rick Perry’s suggestion, shoppers could roam among the chain stores packing heat, ready for a shootout. The owners of that vast operation, similar to those who stage concerts and pro sports, think otherwise. The mall has a security force of more than a hundred people. Yeah — I hear the joke about the feckless mall cops. But the Mall of America trusts them more than well-armed shoppers to protect people, as they should.

Surprising though it may seem, gun ownership is declining over all in the United States. We are still awash with weapons — nearly a third of all American households have an adult with a gun. But that’s down from nearly half of all households in 1973.

What we’re moving toward, then, are regions that are safer than others, and public spaces that are safer than others, led by private enterprise, shunning the gun crazies who want everyone armed. The new reality comes with the inconvenience and hassle of screening and pat-downs similar to the routines at airports — enforced gun-free zones, not mere suggestions.

As a way to make everyday life seem less frightening, the new reality is absurd. But that’s the cost, apparently, of an extreme interpretation of a constitutional amendment designed to fend off British tyranny, a freedom that has become a tyranny in itself.

## **ESSAY PROMPT**

**Please summarize the article in 1-2 paragraphs, and then respond in a paragraph whether you agree with the establishment of gun-free zones, whether you believe citizens should be free to exercise their second amendment rights everywhere, or if you have a more complex position.**