**Name:**

**CRITICAL READING: Conformity English 2A**

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**Marking the Text:** Figuring out what an author is arguing …

**Directions:** Number the paragraphs of the text – 1-12.

**Step 1:** Read the text looking for key words. Circle them.

(What is the most important word in the sentence? In the paragraph?)

**Step 2:** Partner Share: Tell your elbow partner what words you circled in the text.

**Step 3:** Label the left margin SAY; label the right margin DO.

**Step 4:** Read the text focusing on what the author is SAYing in each paragraph.

Write a **one sentence** summary or paraphrase **in the left margin next** to that paragraph.

**Step 5:** USE Your OWN PAPER TO ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS in complete sentences (if you need more room):

1. What, according to the author, is the societal norm that Twilight Zone episode is questioning?
2. Explain, in your own words, the author's views on teen's willingness to fit in.
3. What is the author saying about behavioral choices made? forming personal opinions?
4. Do you agree?
5. What additional evidence would you need to agree/disagree?
6. What questions would you ask this author in an interview?
7. Why does this issue matter to you/society today?

**Step 6:** Read the text focusing on what the author is DOing in each paragraph. Appealing to Ethos? Logos? Pathos?

Write a **one sentence** summary or paraphrase **in the right margin next** to that paragraph.

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**Teens struggle to combat conformity** Published 12:09 a.m. ET Feb. 15, 2017

<http://abcnews.go.com/Primetime/Health/story?id=1495038>

In the *Twilight Zone*episode “Eye of the Beholder” by Rod Serling, a woman goes through surgery after surgery in order to try to achieve the beauty by which she is surrounded. Each surgery ends up as a failure, and with each she grows more and more hopeless that she is unlike everyone else around her. At the end of the episode, it is revealed that a beautiful woman is really trying to conform to the pig-like faces of everyone else, or the societal norm, highlighting the way society’s concept of “beauty” can sometimes be truly absurd, subjective, and alienating.

This episode is a perfect example of conformity, or shaping actions and beliefs to align with the opinions and behaviors of others. Unfortunately, this episode has become a reality. Currently, teenagers conform to anything and everything to avoid standing out in the fear of being judged or exiled by their peers, even if they do not agree to the beliefs of the clique they have chosen to fit into. Through the ROGATE (Research Opportunities in Gifted and Talented Education) program, a service offered by the Educational Information and Resource Center (EIRC), I have been able to conduct an in-depth study on this growing problem. ROGATE is a rigorous program in which students are able to choose a topic, form a hypothesis about it, and research it. After the research is gathered and organized, we are encouraged to present our findings to their peers.

Of course, there is healthy conformity. Listening when your mother tells you to wash the dishes is considered healthy and normal.

However, the unhealthy kind, in which teens blindly follow the ideas and actions of a group of people, without realizing what kind of negative effects it has on them and society today, is growing to be increasingly common.

There are some main causes for why this has been increasing in the past few years. Seeing skinny models with perfect bodies in magazines and on social media makes teens believe the only way they will feel good about themselves is to look like them. If they don’t, they pretend — “fake it until they make it.” However, most pictures in magazines and on social media are so photo-shopped that it’s unrealistic to look like that.

Also, teenagers are still exploring themselves. They want to establish their identity without being the same as their parents. They often conclude that acting like a certain group of people will allow them to establish their identity and have stability and acceptance in their lives. When they find that sense of family within their clique, they do not realize they have been conforming.

Some of the effects of this level of conformity are that teens tend to mature at a younger age in hopes of fitting in. Makeup usage has shot up by 90 percent just in the last decade. Moreover, diversity has been lost. Groups like goths have ceased to exist, because everyone tries to fit in with what they think is considered “cool,” and have blended in with everyone else. Even misfits tend to dress and act like each other in order to fit in amongst themselves.

Teens tend to change their personality when they come into contact with new people, shifting from being shallow and petty to caring in a matter of minutes. This stress of always needing to fit in causes teens to be afraid of the possibility of not being able to, even at lunch or at a school dance.

In the Ash Experiment, part of a study done on conformity and human behavior, a teen sat with many actors and was given a set of lines. He was asked to determine which of the two lines were equally sized. Every time he would give the correct answer, the actors would give the wrong answer. After only two or three questions, the teen started giving the same incorrect answer as the rest of the actors, not even confident enough to trust what he saw with his own eyes over others.

However, it’s not entirely teenagers’ fault that they feel the need to conform. In today’s world, there are numerous outside influences that put too much pressure on them, such as commercials and social media. However, conformity can be lessened. If all teenagers got a sense of empathy and understanding from their families, they may not feel such a huge need to conform to their friends or a certain clique. It is very important for parents to develop connections with their children, and influence them in a way where they are able to accept diversity, empathize for others, and turn down negative influences.

Comfortable teens are able to develop the ability to make choices about what to think, how to act, and also make individual decisions, without feeling stress when these decisions don’t conform to peer and societal norms.