**Grade 7 Common Core Aligned Prompt**

**Do You Or Do You Not Choose the New “Choose MyPlate”?**

**Dear Editor in Chief:**

I just read the article in yesterday’s newspaper titled “Michelle Obama Helps Launch MyPlate, the Newest Nutrition Education Tool From the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).” In the article, your reporter describes how the USDA’s prior tool, MyPyramid, has been replaced by a picture of a plate. On the plate are five sections, one for each of the five food groups. Each section is supposedly in correct portion size to teach us how to eat healthily. All of the quotes included in the article are from supporters of this new model. I, however, disagree with the model and want to make sure your paper voices both sides of the story.

As a child, I was taught to eat based upon the “Basic 4,” or the four food groups. It was the USDA that came up with the Basic 4 model in 1956. Then, in the 1990s, the USDA decided there were five food groups and it needed a new tool. It created the Food Guide Pyramid, a pyramid that was broken into five sections, one for each of the food groups. Food groups that we should eat more of were at the larger bottom of the pyramid, and foods we should eat less of were at the smaller top of the pyramid. Then ,in 2000, the USDA created another version of the pyramid called MyPyramid. This time all of the food group sections were vertically aligned, and there was a person climbing up the side of the pyramid to show that exercise is important. And now, the USDA has changed the model again! This time, it is a completely new picture to learn.

Eating healthily is getting confusing! Commercials on television and in magazines tell us to eat a certain food. Food packages are covered with labels and claims that try to convince us to buy them. We can find lots of nutrition information on the Internet or from friends, but how do we know if it is good advice? With no formal education in nutrition, consumers like me look to experts like the USDA to know what to do. And that is more difficult when the USDA keeps changing the model. MyPyramid, MyPlate— all I know is that the only thing the USDA’s changes lead to is MyConfusion.

**To the Editor:**

Bravo to the USDA! And bravo to the *Panton Post* for seeing it newsworthy to report on the landmark shift in nutrition education from the Food Guide Pyramid to the Choose My Plate model. As a nutritionist, I have spent years trying to use the Food Guide Pyramid with my clients to help them make healthier choices in their diets. Time after time, my clients have been confused and I couldn’t blame them. The Food Guide Pyramid was confusing. I applaud the choice by the USDA to scrap the pyramid and start with a fresh, new image.

It was time for a change. Studies show that Americans are becoming more and more overweight and continue to make unhealthy food choices despite nutrition education efforts. Even if the Food Guide Pyramid was not to blame for the poor food choices being made, something had to be done to spark some changes in the American diet.

MyPlate, the new model, is much easier to understand. There is no need to measure the amount of food you eat— you just need to compare the way your plate looks to the model. Do your vegetables fill up a quarter of the plate? Do your grains take up more than a quarter of the plate?

In my opinion, the USDA made the right decision with this change. The Food Guide Pyramid was too confusing to be effective. The MyPlate model is very simple and user-friendly. Americans were not getting the message about healthy eating, so it was time for a change in nutrition education.

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When writing letters to the editor to provide a personal response to news articles, authors must present their views in a logical and persuasive way. Authors may offer factual details to support their arguments or try to appeal to readers’ emotions. Newspapers often publish letters from people on different sides of an issue, such as one letter in favor of a specific point of view and one letter opposing that point of view.

The two letters in response to an article about the USDA’s new image, the MyPlate graphic, present differing viewpoints. Explain the viewpoints of the two authors, and then analyze the effectiveness of each author’s argument. How does each author support his or her position? Is each argument successful?

As you plan, write, and edit your analysis, be sure that you:

* Describe each author’s viewpoint.
* Describe how each author supports his or her position.
* Explain whether or not the supporting evidence provided by each author is effective or not.
* Support your response with specific evidence from each letter.
* Provide an appropriate introduction and a conclusion.

Be sure to check your writing for correct grammar, spelling, and mechanics.

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| Item ID: G07\_ChooseMyPlate | Grade: 7 |
| Content Area: Composition | |
| DOK: 4 |  |
| CCSS: **Writing 9:** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research**; Reading Informational 8**: Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims. | |

Key Details:

Viewpoints

* The author of the 1st letter thinks that the new graphic is too confusing.
* The author of the 2nd letter thinks that the new graphic is vastly improved over the previous version; user-friendly

Supporting Details

* 1st letter:
  1. The many changes cause confusion.
  2. Many people are too confused to be able to apply the guideline correctly.
  3. The USDA goal of healthy eating is not being met.
  4. The USDA must counter the confusing messages of packaging and commercials.
* 2nd letter:
  1. The author of the second letter is a nutritionist, which lends credibility to the letter.
  2. The original design of the Food Guide Pyramid was too confusing; the new MyPlate image works better.
  3. Since the image is clearer, people will eat better.

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| **4** The response demonstrates an understanding of the complexities of the text.   * Fully addresses the demands of the question or prompt * Effectively uses explicitly stated text as well as inferences drawn from the text to support an answer or claim |
| **3** The response demonstrates an understanding of the text.   * Addresses the demands of the question * Uses some explicitly stated text and/or some inferences drawn from the text to support the answer |
| **2**  The response is incomplete or oversimplified and demonstrates a partial or literal understanding of the text.   * Attempts to answer the question * Uses explicitly stated text that demonstrates some understanding |
| **1** The response shows evidence of a minimal understanding of the text.   * Shows evidence that some meaning has been derived from the text to answer the question * Has minimal textual evidence |

**Exemplary Response** *(add more space as needed to fully answer the prompt)***:**

The two authors have different points of view about the USDA and the different graphics they have used to try to teach people about good nutrition. The author of the first letter is confused by the USDA because it changed the pictures too many times. The author of the second letter explains that the newest graphic is simple and easy to understand. Both authors think that people’s lives and nutritional choices are affected by the image the USDA chooses to use.

The main argument of the author of the first letter is that by changing the guidelines so often, the USDA is confusing people. Instead of people eating healthily as a result of the USDA guidelines, the author maintains that people are simply confused. Therefore, the goal of the USDA in creating this dietary guideline—that of having people eat healthier—is not being met. The author of this letter thinks that people get too many different messages from food packaging and commercials. The author thinks the USDA should be the clear, easy guide to follow so that people will not be confused by all of the other information out there. However, this cannot happen if the USDA keeps changing its message.

The author of the second article has a somewhat different point of view. The fact that this author is a nutritionist really means that he or she knows what they are talking about. This author believes that the USDA has greatly improved the pyramid by switching to the new MyPlate image. Like the author of the first letter, the author of the second letter believes that the pyramid was confusing. The author explains how clear the new image is and says it will be much easier for people to understand and follow.

The authors of both of the letters make good arguments. The author of the first letter supports the claim with facts about the history of the USDA food guides. The author of the second letter supports the claim by talking about his personal experience as a nutritionist as well as referring to some research about obesity. These types of evidence make the authors’ arguments convincing. Both letters clearly state their points of view and end with effective conclusions that stress their main arguments to the reader.