

## Writing

*The following essay represents a high-scoring response to the MCAS writing prompt, by a Marblehead student.*

*Grade 7 writing looks like:*

The wind is howling and the waves are crashing as you lean out of the boat to stop it from capsizing. You can feel the salt in your mouth from the waves as you plow through them to the finish line. You can hear the crowd cheering as you look behind you, and you see a competitor, racing at the back of your boat! He is gaining on you and it is a tight race, but you cross the finish line in first place! This is how it feels when you are racing to win a sailing race! From just this image, you can tell that sailing is a very fun and exciting sport, which students would enjoy. This would make the sport of sailing a great after-school activity. Sailing is for everyone, from slow harbor cruises to fast racers. The difference between the athletes of the sport of sailing is because of the diversity of sailing itself.

Sailing has many different elements, but I've chosen a few basic, but important, parts of sailing. One element is the wind. You need to have wind to sail. A person not racing might not want a lot of wind, but just enough to make the boat go. This speed would allow that the person to have a relaxing time, so he can doze into space while watching the landscape bob slowly past. (Note: the land is not actually bobbing, the boat is.) This is good for students who want a carefree time. But for the more competitive student who wants to race, he would want a lot of wind, so he could sail past the other competitors and win the race. But you have to be careful, for if there is too much wind, the boat has a high chance of capsizing. Capsizing is when the boat tips over so the sail hits the water. When this happens, the boat will start to take on water. This slows your boat down so you will lose the race. This is why you want enough wind to go fast, but not too much so you capsize. Another element of sailing is the waves. When racing, someone would want little or no waves. This is because waves, when sailing upwind (heading with your bow pointing in the general direction of where the wind is coming from), slows your boat down. But there are times when you do want waves. One time is when you are going downwind and you are racing. When sailing downwind, waves help push your boat along, which makes you go faster. Another time is when you just want to have fun. When waves are big, and your boat is heading downwind, you can surf the waves, riding the wave with your bow (front part of the boat) out of the water. This technique would be for the more daring and adventurous student. Take into account these elements, and you will succeed in accomplishing this sports many different challenges.

Sailing has many challenges to offer, which is good for students who are ambitious. A big challenge of sailing is racing. Racing has many different parts to it, which makes it so interesting and challenging. There is the start, the only place on the race course where all of the boats in a race are together. This is what makes the start challenging, it is so crowded that it is hard to start well. But that is what makes it interesting too. There are many different ways to start on a small, crowded starting line, and many of those ways are used on each race. There is also the middle section of the race, where the competing sailors sail as fast as they can around the marks (floating buoys) on the course. This is the longest part of the race, and it is very challenging too. You have to look for wind changes,

puffs (places where the wind is at its highest strength), where the waves are, and other things which you have to avoid, or places where you want to go, which would help you win the race. The last part of the race is the finish line. This can be hard because this is the place where everyone wants to reach before the other sailors. The finish can have a very competitive air, with people reckless in their aspiration to win, so you have to be careful not to foul anyone or get fouled when you are so close to victory! Fouling or getting fouled slows you down, so you don't want to be fouled right before the finish line. The students will have to work hard to become a winner of a race, but it is worth it.

Sailing is tough, physical sport at times too, so it would help increase the students' physical abilities to a better level. Racing, as you know, is challenging and is a part of sailing, but it is also part of a regatta. A regatta is an event which really lasts several days and contains many races. Regattas are not only about the races but they are also about having a good, fun time, and is a very big social event. These regattas would be good to strengthen students' social side who are participating in this after school activity. But besides being physically challenging, sailing is mentally challenging.

Even though you would think it, sailing is mainly a mental sport. I would think math teachers would praise sailing, for this sport has a lot of math. Sailors work with angles a lot. A reason why sailors use angles is to see if they are going to make the mark (to see if they will be able to pass the mark). Making the mark uses angles because you want to find the sharpest angle from you to the mark. You want it sharp so you don't have to sail any more distance than you need to, thus wasting time. If you make your angle to the mark too big and wide, then other boats might pass in between you and the mark. You would lose both places (1<sup>st</sup> place, 2<sup>nd</sup> place) and time since you are far away from the mark. But if you make your angle to the mark too small and tight, then you would hit the mark. If you hit the mark, then you would have to turn your boat around in a circle once (a 360) so you would lose both time and places too. This is one reason why sailing would help students with their math skills. Sailing also boosts a student's self confidence and self reliance. This is because if you sail in a one person boat like myself, then you would have to go out there on the water and sail by yourself. This takes a lot of confidence in yourself, and sailing helps raise it every time you go sailing. You also must rely on yourself that when you sail by yourself, everything will be okay. This will make the students better in life, because it helps them with their confidence and reliance upon themselves.

These reasons help explain why sailing is a very fun sport which students would enjoy. They would have fun learning about themselves in a way that is unique to any other sport. Sailing is also so diverse that no one could get bored with it. Every person who participates in this marvelous sport will have a life which has been improved in both his mental and physical areas. This is why I think the sport of sailing would be a great after-school activity.

*Grade 7 2006 student's MCAS composition, Marblehead*

Writing is effective in developing ideas, topic development and organization, uses striking language and is fairly free of errors in conventions.