

### Article of the Week (AoW) Directions

1. Mark up your confusion – either highlighting or underlining
2. Mark up the text. Annotate the article with comments, questions, inferences, etc. You can use a variety of sentences, phrases, or symbols to show your thinking.
3. Write a developed paragraph response to one of the prompts below.

## School prom "draft" prompts reflection in exclusive California city

Source: Adolfo Flores, Christopher Goffard and Hannah Fry/Los Angeles Times/May 13, 2014

NEWPORT BEACH, Calif. — Corona del Mar High School has palm trees, ocean breezes and a parking lot where students hustle out of shiny BMWs as they head to class.

One of the state's top-ranked schools, it has battled perceptions as a place where money and privilege sometimes run amok, a hypercompetitive milieu where expectations of academic achievement — and physical beauty — are extreme.

Recent controversies have not helped. Earlier this year, the Newport Beach school expelled 11 students accused in a cheating scheme, with one former official complaining that the students' comparative wealth appeared to affect who got punished.

Over the last few days, with preparations under way for the June prom, news leaked of a "tradition" in which senior boys host an NFL-style "draft" to pick desirable prom dates.

"I think it's insulting — it demeans girls," said Andrea Fine, who is active in the school's PTA and the mother of two students, a boy and a girl. "Among my circle of friends, we talk about it. We're kind of alarmed, (like) 'What's our school coming to?'"

Over the weekend, school principal Kathy Scott sent an email to parents bringing the draft to their attention and urging them to dissuade their kids from participating. "It is not OK for any student to be objectified or judged in any way," the letter said, adding that "this is not behavior that is consistent with our school's outstanding reputation."

Social media sites buzzed with the controversy, some decrying the prom draft as "creepy" and "sexist," though some Corona del Mar students have rallied to its defense. One girl, a junior, said she doesn't find the practice offensive and that most girls knew ahead of the draft who wanted to ask them to the prom.

"There's still a chance of us saying no," said the student, who is not being identified because of possible disciplinary action by the school district.

Before the message was taken down, a tweet from one male participant proclaimed: “Many drafters on the prowl tomorrow for (hashtag)freeagents so dress nice ladies,” the Orange County Register reported.

Students who said they are part of a group calling itself “the 2014 CdM Senior Prom Draft Committee” have sent anonymous emails to the media, claiming the draft “was planned and organized with only the best intentions in mind” and providing details about its logistics.

Forty senior boys assembled recently at a “private venue” clad in ceremonial sport coats to participate in the ritual, according to the emails. Numbers were plucked from a number ball roller and issued to the boys, who took turns selecting girls. Each boy was put on the clock and given two minutes to make a selection.

“The picks were announced by the draft commissioner and were generally applauded,” one email said. The ceremony “provides a solution for two guys who want to ask the same girl.”

It is against the rules to pay for a higher draft pick, the email said, though some students say they have seen money exchanged under the table. In one case during the separate junior prom draft, a student said, a boy paid \$140 to increase his chances of asking out a specific girl.

The email said that contrary to some reports, the female students were not ranked or rated.

Katrina Foley, a Newport-Mesa Unified School District trustee, reacted quickly to the news by calling for district-wide ethics training for all students.

“They probably believe it’s not offensive or objectionable and that’s part of the problem,” Foley said. “A lot of this stuff comes back to wealth and being responsible with that wealth.”

According to U.S. News and World Report, Corona del Mar ranks 37th in the state and 222nd in the country, with 71 percent of its 2,440 students participating in Advanced Placement classes. The school is heavily white; minorities make up just 16 percent of the student body.

Some observers say the prom draft reflects a sense of entitlement among kids with money. Jane Garland, the school district’s former head of discipline, said she saw a version of the phenomenon during the cheating scandal, when she felt pressure to go easy on kids whose parents donated heavily to the school.

“We were always told, ‘they’re high-profile, be careful,’ ” she said. “There is really a bad culture over there, and everyone knows it’s there.”

Irvina Kanarek, who graduated from nearby Newport Harbor High School in 2000, said she developed an eating disorder when she discovered she couldn’t squeeze into her prom dress.

She later founded a nonprofit group, Rewrite Beautiful, intended to prevent eating disorders.

Growing up in Newport Beach, she said, the voices of adult women around her shaped her values in ways she only understood — and learned to resist — when she got older.

“I heard things like, ‘Oh, if you live in Corona del Mar, maybe you’ll find somebody to take care of you.’ ‘Your boobs are nice, but they’d be better if they were one size bigger.’ ‘I’m on this new detox, I’m only eating grapefruit for a week.’

“When you hear that over and over, it just becomes the norm. ‘Yes, we all go on detoxes, we all get boob jobs, we all want to marry a rich man.’”

As she sees it, the pressure on high school girls to look perfect, particularly around prom season, is vastly more intense than when she was a student. “It’s common,” she said. “You can go on Instagram and find (hashtag)promdetox or (hashtag)promdiet.”

More than merely money, she said, the controversies at Corona del Mar High School are a function of the area’s hypercompetitiveness.

“Cheating, eating disorders, drafting people for prom — that’s (a reflection of) a highly competitive nature. I don’t want to say it’s just wealthy kids behaving badly. I think it has to do with a higher standard of achievement.”

Zoe Nicholson, president of Newport Beach-based Pacific Shore National Organization for Women, objected to the draft but thinks the participating students did not intend harm.

“Seeing human beings as commodities is so ingrained in how we think,” Nicholson said.

Nicholson thinks punishing the students would prevent an honest and needed conversation about deeper issues.

“What about the girl with the eating disorder, the girl who wants to kill herself, the girl hiding alcohol, the girl in the room who isn’t going, the girl who didn’t qualify for the draft?”

**Respond to one of the following prompts. Use the back of this paper.**

1. Do you feel that this “prom draft” is wrong? Why or why not?
2. What messages do you think this type of behavior sends to high school students?
3. Choose a passage from this article and respond to it.