Sample Writing Prompt:

ZM Corporation, a major household appliance manufacturer, is in bankruptcy and must decide whether to sell SB, a foreign-based appliance company it owns, or shut it down permanently. Using the facts below, write an essay arguing for one option over the other based on the following two criteria:

* ZM wants to emerge from bankruptcy financially sound and do so as quickly as possible.
* ZM wants to focus on developing its own brands and strengthening its sales.

The sale of SB would produce an immediate injection of cash for ZM. Two bidders have a strong interest in SB. The SB brand has a strong reputation for technological innovation. SB has highly dedicated customers in several key markets. SB has lost money in nine of the past ten years. Recently ZM has invested heavily in developing updated products for SB that use some of ZM’s most advanced technology. ZM would continue to sell parts and technology to SB for these appliances. An independent SB would compete with some of ZM’s brands in certain markets.

Shutting down SB would involve substantial short-term costs and would be a long process. ZM would have to pay off SB’s creditors and make settlements with SB’s unions, as well as honor warranties and provide parts and service for SB customers. There is some possibility that selling off SB’s assets piecemeal after shutdown might, in the long term, bring in more net money than selling SB intact. A shutdown would allow ZM to retain exclusive control of its advanced technology. Some of SB’s highly anticipated new products could be rebranded as ZM products.