

**HUNTER COLLEGE READING/WRITING CENTER**  
**Writing Across the Curriculum**  
**The CUNY Proficiency Examination**  
**Task 2 Sample Reading 2**

**Reading Selection**

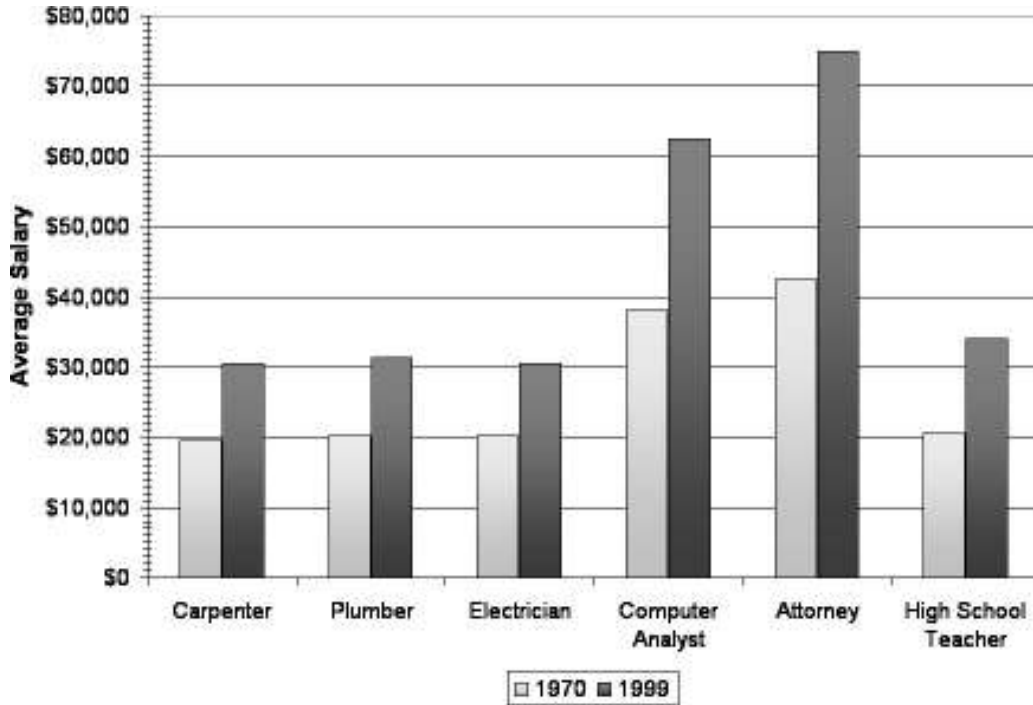
The widespread assumption that one needs a college education to succeed in the modern world is wrong – or at least seriously misguided. Considering how competitive blue collar salaries are, and considering how secure blue collar jobs are, society’s relentless focus on the pursuit of the B.A. seems misplaced. A college degree is not a guarantor of a better salary, or even of getting a job at all. It makes more sense for society to invest more in the vocational schools that can teach our kids the skills they need to succeed as carpenters or electricians.

Our own city of Croftsburg remains a thriving center of building and manufacturing, with thousands of good jobs for skilled workers such as carpenters, plumbers, and electricians. It’s true that, on average, the blue collar jobs which don’t require college degrees pay less than jobs which do require college degrees. Nevertheless, these blue collar jobs offer competitive salaries. A generation ago, blue collar workers such as electricians were earning as much as teachers did. Back then, skilled blue collar workers with only a high school degree could even earn about half the salary of a lawyer, the most highly paid professionals. Nowadays, these skilled workers still command salaries nearly equal to those of college graduates such as teachers and computer programmers.

Moreover, the blue collar jobs offer greater job security because of lower unemployment. Throughout the 1990s, unemployment rates for non-college graduates fell from a high of over 9% unemployment in 1990 to only 4% in 1999. And, if the trend continues, non-college graduate unemployment will continue to fall into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Contrast that to college graduates. Since 1990, the unemployment rates for college graduates has slowly but steadily climbed. By 1999, college graduate unemployment rates stood at over 6% - more than 2 percentage points higher than non-college graduates.

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**Task 2 Sample Graphs 2**

**Figure I:** Average Annual Wages for Selected Occupations in Croftsburg, 1970 and 1999.



**Figure II:** Unemployment Rates for College Graduates and Non-College Graduates in Croftsburg 1990-1999.

