Which characteristic(s) of adult students best describes the student in this situation?

Use your knowledge of andragogy and your own tutoring strategies to address each student’s concerns.

1. A forty-something man in a rumpled suit enters the Writing Center. He appears tired and harried. He hands you a paper from his briefcase, saying that he needs the paper to be checked for grammar and sentence structure. As you read through the paper, you notice quite a few lower-order concerns, but what strikes you most about the paper is the lack of organization. Though he has clearly done his research and has made some thoughtful arguments, his ideas are fragmented and he has no sense of transition from one assertion to another. He demonstrates very little development of his arguments, and seems to have difficulty supporting his claims. His paper is short, just shy of one and a half pages.

You begin to ask about the assignment, and discover that it is supposed to be a four-page paper and is due in two days. You decide to begin with higher-order concerns first, and begin asking open-ended questions to help get the student thinking about what he wants to say. Suddenly, the man becomes irritable. “Look, I don’t have time for this. Can you just help me with the grammar and be done with it?”

Which characteristic(s) of adult students best describes the student in this situation?

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1. An attractive woman in her late twenties comes in. She hands you a critical analysis of de Tocqueville’s **Democracy In America**. When you ask about the assignment, she is plainly enthusiastic about the material, but very unsure that her writing will be up to par. She explains that she had once been a good student, but that she had nearly flunked out of college the first time around, and was finally making good on a promise to herself to finish her degree. As you read her paper, you are surprised to discover that she is quite a gifted writer. She appears to have few problems with spelling or grammar, and her treatment of the material is intelligent and logical. The paper has some organizational issues and some of her sentences appear as though she is trying too hard. However, on the whole, the paper is very good and just could use some brushing up.

When you exclaim how talented she is as a writer, her eyes narrow. “Really?” she asks doubtfully. You reply in the affirmative, then show her places where the paper could use some polishing. You demonstrate how to take an unwieldy sentence and clean it up. “Is that it?” she asks. You search for something else to say, but can’t think of anything else. “I’m not good that this. I really need someone to help me here,” she says. “Are you sure that’s all that’s wrong?”

Which characteristic(s) of adult students best describes the student in this situation?

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3. A student e-mails you a six-page paper on wind energy. The student says that, although he has been out of school for fifteen years, he is a confident writer, and felt comfortable with the assignment. However, his instructor has asked that, as part of their grade, students get feedback from a tutor. It is clear the student is doing this grudgingly. The paper is due in two days. As you read, you get a sinking feeling. The student clearly knows his stuff and has put a lot of work into the paper, but it is almost incomprehensible. The sentences are long, convoluted and wordy, the language is overly abstract, and the paragraphs seem to have been edited and reworked in isolation from one another.