

1. Mark your confusion
 2. Show evidence of close reading
 3. Write a 1+ page reflection.
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Handcuffed for Making Clock, Ahmed Mohamed, 14, Wins Time With Obama

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HOUSTON — Ahmed Mohamed’s homemade alarm clock got him suspended from his suburban Dallas high school and detained and handcuffed by police officers on Monday after school officials accused him of making a fake bomb. By Wednesday, it had brought him an invitation to the White House, support from Hillary Rodham Clinton and Mark Zuckerberg, and a moment of head-spinning attention as questions arose whether he had been targeted because of his name and his religion.

As a result, a 14-year-old freshman at MacArthur High School in Irving, Tex., who is partial to tinkering, technology and NASA T-shirts and wants to go to M.I.T., found himself in a social media whirlwind that reflected the nation’s charged debates on Islam, immigration and ethnicity.

“Cool clock, Ahmed,” [President Obama](#) said on Twitter. “Want to bring it to the White House? We should inspire more kids like you to like science. It’s what makes America great.” Mr. Obama’s staff invited Ahmed to the White House for Astronomy Night on Oct. 19, an event bringing together scientists, engineers, astronauts, teachers and students to spend a night stargazing from the South Lawn.

The president’s spokesman said the episode was a case study in unreasoned prejudice in an era when the country is fighting Islamic terrorism at home and in the Middle East.

“This episode is a good illustration of how pernicious stereotypes can prevent even good-hearted people who have dedicated their lives to educating young people from doing the good work that they set out to do,” said Josh Earnest, the White House press secretary.

But on some conservative sites, he was the subject of slurs and vitriol and suggestions that he and his family did not belong here.

Shortly before a news conference Wednesday outside his home in Irving, Ahmed waved to a thick crowd of reporters from the doorway as his family brought pizzas and drinks for the news media. Ahmed said he was considering transferring out of MacArthur High and had indeed accepted Mr. Obama’s invitation.

Asked about the attention and support he had received from Mr. Obama, Mrs. Clinton and Mr. Zuckerberg, a founder of Facebook, Ahmed said, “It felt really outstanding,” adding that he wanted to use his moment in the spotlight to “try my best not just to help me but to help every other kid in the entire world that has a problem like this.” He introduced himself, after saying “as-salaamu alaykum,” the Muslim greeting of peace, as “the person who built a clock and got in a lot of trouble for it.”

Ahmed’s father, Mohamed El Hassan, 54, was at turns humble, emotional, grateful and patriotic, making it a point to mention they lived in their house for more than 30 years and that his son had fixed his car, his phone, his electricity and his computer and had built, in true all-American fashion, a go-kart. “That is not America,” he said of Ahmed’s detainment. “That is not us. That is not like us.”

The Irving police chief, Larry Boyd, said at a news conference on Wednesday that the officers were justified in detaining the teenager based on the information they had at the time, when initially it was “not immediately evident that” Ahmed’s clock was a class experiment. He added, however, that the police had “no evidence to support that there was an intention to create an alarm.” Asked whether the police

would have reacted differently if Ahmed had been white, Chief Boyd said they would have followed the same procedures.

“You can’t take things like that to school,” he said.

The thing in question was the product of Ahmed’s love of invention. He made the clock out of a metal briefcase-style box, a digital display, wires and a circuit board. It was bigger and bulkier than a typical bedside clock, with cords, screws and electrical components.

He said he took it to school on Monday to show an engineering teacher, who said it was nice but then told him he should not show the invention to other teachers. Later, Ahmed’s clock beeped during an English class, and after he revealed the device to the teacher, school officials notified the police, and Ahmed was interrogated by officers.

“She thought it was a threat to her,” Ahmed told reporters Wednesday. “So it was really sad that she took a wrong impression of it.”

Fingerprints and a mug shot were taken at a juvenile detention center. The clock was confiscated, and Ahmed was suspended from school for three days, until Thursday.

In a letter to parents, the school’s principal, Dan Cummings, informed them that the police had responded to a “suspicious-looking item on campus.” The Irving school district acknowledged in a statement Wednesday that the information released about the incident was “unbalanced,” but officials said they could not comment further because of student privacy laws.

Texas Democrats said Ahmed’s detention was an outgrowth of the anti-Muslim sentiments of Irving officials. The city’s mayor, Beth Van Duyne, has been outspoken in criticizing a Muslim group that mediates disputes between the area’s Muslim residents, accusing it of establishing an anti-American [Shariah](#) court of law.

“Ahmed’s arrest is a logical conclusion to Islamophobia in Irving and it’s deplorable,” the chairwoman of the Dallas County Democratic Party, Carol Donovan, said in a statement.

The mayor could not be reached for comment Wednesday night. She wrote on Facebook that she did not fault the school or the police “for looking into what they saw as a potential threat,” but added that as a parent she would be upset if the situation had happened to her child.

“Hopefully, we can all learn from this week’s events and the student, who has obvious gifts, will not feel at all discouraged from pursuing his talent in electronics and engineering,” Ms. Van Duyne wrote.

For his part, Ahmed said the police still had his clock. Before mentioning that he would love to present his inventions to celebrity investors on the “Shark Tank” television show, Ahmed was asked if he had any message for other young gadget-builders.

“Go for it,” he said. “Don’t let people change who you are.”

Possible Response Questions:

1. How would you have reacted if you were Mohammed? His parents?
2. Did the school and police do the right thing?
3. What does what happened to Mohammed reveal about today's society?
4. Choose any paragraph(s) and respond to it.