**SAMPLE PROMPT**

Many successful adults recall a time in their life when they were considered a failure at one pursuit or another. Some of these people feel strongly that their previous failures taught them valuable lessons and led to their later successes. Others maintain that they went on to achieve success for entirely different reasons. In your opinion, can failure lead to success? Or is failure simply its own experience? In your essay, take a position on this question. You may write about either one of the two points of view given, or you may present a different point of view on this question. Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.

**MODEL ESSAY RESPONSE**

Learning the lessons taught by failure is a sure route to success. The United States of America can be seen as a success that emerged from failure: by learning from the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation, the founding fathers were able to create the Constitution, the document on which America is built. Google Inc., the popular Internet search engine, is another example of a success that arose from learning from failure, though in this case Google learned from the failures of its competitors. Another example that shows how success can arise from failure is the story of Rod Johnson, who started a recruiting firm that rose out of the ashes of Johnson’s personal experience of being laid off.

The United States, the first great democracy of the modern world, is also one of the best examples of a success achieved by studying and learning from earlier failures. After just five years of living under the Articles of Confederation, which established the United States of America as a single country for the first time, the states realized that they needed a new document and a stronger government. In 1786, the Annapolis convention was convened. The result, three years later, was the Constitution, which created a more powerful central government while also maintaining the integrity of the states. By learning from the failure of the Articles, the founding fathers created the pivotal document of a country that has become both the most powerful country in the world and a beacon of democracy.

Unlike the United States, which had its fair share of ups and downs over the years, the Internet search engine company, Google Inc., has suffered few setbacks since it went into business in the late 1990s. Google has succeeded by studying the failures of other companies in order to help it innovate its technology and business model. Google identified and solved the problem of assessing the quality of search results by using the number of links pointing to a page as an indicator of the number of people who find the page valuable. Suddenly, Google’s search results became far more accurate and reliable than those from other companies, and now Google’s dominance in the field of Internet search is almost absolute.

The example of Rod Johnson’s success as an entrepreneur in the recruiting field also shows how effective learning from mistakes and failure can be. Rather than accept his failure after being laid off, Johnson decided to study it. After a month of research, Johnson realized that his failure to find a new job resulted primarily from the inefficiency of the local job placement agencies, not from his own deficiencies. A month later, Johnson created Johnson Staffing to correct this weakness in the job placement sector. Today Johnson Staffing is the largest job placement agency in South Carolina, and is in the process of expanding into a national corporation.

Failure is often seen as embarrassing, something to be denied and hidden. But as the examples of the U.S. Constitution, Google, and Rod Johnson prove, if an individual, organization, or even a nation is strong enough to face and study its failure, then that failure can become a powerful teacher. The examples of history and business demonstrate that failure can be the best catalyst of success, but only if people have the courage to face it head on.