

SECTION 1:
EXPOSITORY WRITING

Writing Descriptive Essays

As part of the human experience, we take in and process the world around us through the use of our senses, and many times, we form opinions about objects, places, and people within our world based on the use of that sensory information. These sensory impressions are often the basis for our writing when we write a descriptive essay. The purpose of descriptive writing involves helping an audience understand more fully the subject of an essay, usually a person or place with which the audience is unfamiliar, and to create a dominant impression of that place or person.

The most explicit statement of that impression should be offered in the thesis of the descriptive essay. This thesis should show the audience the writer's plans to reveal something new or unconventional about the essay's subject. For example, a descriptive essay about an umbrella might have the following thesis: "While an umbrella is very useful in the rain, it also serves as an example of one of architecture's most useful elements—the arch." This thesis prepares the audience to look at an ordinary object in a new, more complete way, emphasizing the purpose and need for creating an essay to describe something.

Description can be used as a method of development for an entire essay, or it can be incorporated into other modes of writing, like narration, comparison/contrast, and definition to make those modes of writing more sensory experiences because descriptive papers seek to use language that creates for the audience a vivid mental picture.

Developing descriptions often means using similes and metaphors to describe something, invoking all five senses. For example, a writer may choose to describe eating a jalapeno

pepper in the following way: “Once the tongue registers the heat of the pepper, it is as if your whole mouth expands in an attempt to get away from the flames but cannot quite stay out of reach.” When an audience reads language such as this, they can understand the feeling much better than if you simply wrote, “Eating a jalapeno pepper makes your mouth hot.” At its best, descriptive writing allows readers to close their eyes and see the event, person, object, or place being described in the essay. The ultimate goal is to create an impression and to convey your attitude towards that subject by offering the most revealing and significant details and anecdotes about the subject.

Quick Tips for Students:

1. Pay careful attention to the details and examples you include: all should work towards conveying a dominant impression of the subject of your description, and they should be the most important details and examples for the reader’s understanding of that subject’s significance to you and your audience.
2. Avoid over-idealizing or demonizing the subject of a description. Present your description as being objective and realistic. Nothing is completely good or bad, so describe the subject as something REAL. Don’t forget to use sensory images, especially similes and metaphors, to draw your readers into the description.
3. When describing a person, choose the person for your description wisely. Avoid a person who will lead you to be overly sentimental, such as a family member or friend who has recently died. Choose, instead, a person who is somewhat unusual or engaging, not only to you, but to your audience.
4. Also, keep in mind that this is not a story about your experience, so remember that your purpose in describing is different from the narrative.

“The Barn” – Prize Winner

In this descriptive essay, the writer uses visual description and figurative language (the “ballet” of dust) to create a vivid experience for the reader. Through alternating spatial and emphatic organization, she brings us both physically and emotionally into the barn. Her description produces a feeling of nostalgia for simpler times, and the main point centers around connecting this place to that idealistic way of living, without need for the “convenience” of technology.

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24 February 2011

The Barn

My grandfather stopped using the structure a few years ago. As his health has deteriorated with age, so has the barn. Stepping through the door takes me back to a time when I was a little girl, when the most technologically advanced toy I played with was Rock’em, Sock’em Robots. Men worked the fields all summer, but when harvest time came and the tobacco work moved inside the barn, the women went as well. My memories of the barn come from those fall days and nights because where the women were, the children were also.

The wooden doors are grayed from the weather, the hinges are corroded, and weeds protrude from the ground in front of them where a well-worn dirt path once rested. The door opens just enough for me to pass through. Upon my entry, its simple beauty evokes thoughts of uncomplicated times—times when cell phones were an unrealistic dream viewed only on television, on that television were three channels only,

and on those channels I watched family-oriented sitcoms where, inevitably, I was taught a lesson about right and wrong.

As I enter, my eyes are drawn to the tiny spotlights that are created from the sun peeking through the holes in the rusted tin walls. The spotlights highlight the ballet performances of dust that have been awakened with the movement of the door and the shuffling of my feet. They perform an intricate dance, floating in the illumination, as if it is the performance of a lifetime and all eyes are directly on them. As their performance ends, they settle to the walls and floor, awaiting their encore.

The walls' beams were made with hand-hewn logs, a large portion of them harvested from the location in which the barn now stands. As I touch the logs, my fingertips run across the roughness of the dry bark that still remains after many years. Not one log was stripped completely, nor were they planed to be straight; they were simply taken from nature, cut lengthwise to fit, and nailed into place. The walls are lined with antique farm implements that were used many times over but have been retired as newer technology has replaced them.

I move toward the middle of the structure, and I am instantly drawn to the corn crib. I use the cracks between the log walls as footholds and grab the side wall with my right hand, hoisting myself inside. I can't believe how much smaller it is than I remember. On the back side of the crib is a small entrance to the hay loft. As I enter the loft, I place my hand onto the walls which are lined with a hodgepodge of misshapen, cast-off planks that are irregular in many ways and are used for the sole purpose of ensuring the hay is stacked efficiently. Between the planks are one- to two-inch spaces. My most vivid

memories of the barn have everything to do with the spaces between the planks, fond memories of my grandfather and his “on-the-farm” humor.

For example, just below the loft is the lower stall. The stall was used for livestock when they needed medical care or when it was time to milk the cows. My grandfather would take my brother and me to the barn with him when it was milking time. We would sit in the loft peeking through the cracks as Pa would milk away. Giggling commenced soon after he began his milking routine. We knew exactly what was going to happen; it was just a matter of time. Then, with the precision of a sharp shooter, Pa took aim, and from between those cracks we would be shot with milk, straight from the cow’s udder.

As I now leave the barn, I turn back and look around, trying vehemently to store all of the little details in my mind: the musty odor that is mixed with a hint of cedar, the sounds of the creaks and pops of the wood and tin as the wind blows through the cracks, the damp coolness that surrounds me, and the vastness of the structure. I can always remember the barn and know that technology and fast-paced lifestyles aren’t all the world has to offer. Sometimes simple is just that—simple—and although technology offers us convenience, rarely does it offer us peaceful moments.

Writing Narrative Essays

Narration is frequently the first assignment in most English 1010 Composition classes but may also be assigned in other classes or used as support in other types of essays. Although students and teachers often view narrative writing as one of the simplest forms of writing, there are actually many skills a writer needs to effectively convey meaning in this form.

The purpose of narrative writing is to tell a story with which an audience can relate or from which an audience can learn. Narratives must have both a cohesive plot and a central point of significance to be complete; you cannot have one without the other. While many narratives may use a clear thesis statement to present the main idea of the story, others are not so explicit. The thesis in any narrative, however, should reveal the purpose or reason for telling the story in the first place so that the audience can understand the story's underlying significance or relevance to their own lives.

Narratives are organized around the plot points of the story a writer is telling and developed with the most important details. Often, a writer will start the paper at the beginning of the story and tell us the story straight through. Another way of organizing a narrative is to tell the story as a series of flashbacks where the plot is interrupted in well-chosen places with commentary by the writer. Once the writer has a purpose, thesis, and method of organization, he or she can begin to develop the plot of the story. Often students can get bogged down in all the possible details they can include in their narrative. For example, if the writer is telling a story about a childhood baseball game, he may be tempted to tell his audience about the uniforms, the weather conditions of

the day, and how many people were watching the game. While all of these details help create a precise picture of that baseball game, they may not have anything to do with the point the writer is making, i.e. the writer's specific purpose. A good rule for developing narratives is to include details about emotions and thoughts of the central characters, and descriptions of the most important objects and places to give the audience clues that will lead the audience to the central purpose of the story.

When a student writes a narrative, it is important to keep in mind the fact that the reader might not be as familiar with the events and places as the writer is. Consequently, the writer should try to include details that will make the readers see the characters and events of the story as if they were watching the story play out in front of them. An audience should be able to anticipate the point the story is making and follow the plot of the story without confusion. Narrative writing, at its best, will take an audience through some chronological version of events and reveal to them something that they can learn through the experiences of others.

Quick Tips for Students:

1. Pay close attention to the assignment requirements for length when determining the timeframe for your narrative. Especially in English 1010 essays that are usually shorter in length, it sometimes helps to consider narrowing the timeframe for the body of the essay to the most significant part of a day, an hour, or even a portion of an hour. Then, student writers can employ methods of flashback or use introductory paragraphs to offer essential background information (exposition) for the narrative.

2. Prioritize when it comes to choosing the most important details, characters, and events for developing a narrative, but make those details, characters, and events vivid for your readers by employing methods of description and appealing to the five senses. Keep your audience in mind by understanding that they may not be as familiar with the people, places, and things that make up your story, so you may need to offer a little more description for those people than you would for others.
3. Don't forget to include dialogue in your narrative, but choose dialogue that reveals something about the characters or the relationships between the characters who are speaking to one another.

“Wedding Gone Wrong” is a narrative example which shows that a writer can tell a story without elaborate background and still be understood. This writer might have told more about her family, her sisters’ ages, what her mother and father did for a living, but instead she begins the story as if we already know enough to walk right into a wedding reception with her and see what can go wrong, as the title warns us. She conveys to us that this event took place when she was eight years old and we deduce that her three sisters are even younger. In a few brush strokes, this writer brings the reader up to speed.

This essay has good examples of description and dialogue. We see the beautiful wedding reception, the father’s pointing finger and the faces of the horrified guests, and we hear the father’s tone of voice, the old men laughing and the crashing of crystal. Dialogue increases the drama by creating a series of scenes, the most vivid of which is when the mother steps forward to block the girls from the wedding cake with an imperial command, “Do not go near that cake,” which jumps off the page as it must have startled the little girls. Unfortunately, they recovered quickly enough to transgress their mother’s wishes.

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4 February, 2011

Wedding Gone Wrong

As we walked into the room, my eyes sparkled. In my eight-year-old mind, a wedding was the most magical thing on the planet. It was being held in just a simple church building, but it had been transformed into a white kingdom. There was white fabric lining the walls and flowers in beautiful tall vases in every corner. In the back was a delightfully decorated picture scene with an archway made of winding rose bushes and a fake pond trickling light blue water. The whole place seemed to glow with beauty. Who knew it could all be chaos in just one little touch?

We were late, of course, so the bride and groom had already said their vows. We stood in the doorway ready to enter as my dad crouched down in front of us and spoke quietly, “Okay you guys.” My dad had a firm voice, one that made you wish you had done better, even if he was saying, “Good job.” All he had to do was whisper, and he had our attention immediately. “This wedding is for one of my high school friends, so stay out of trouble while I go say hi to some people, and then we will go get some ice cream.” We nodded anxiously, anything for ice cream. My dad stood up and was immediately caught up in the ebb and flow of jabbering adults.

We walked through the room, four little girls in matching purple dresses with curled and pinned hair. Rachel was immediately glued to my arm, hiding her face from any onlookers. Kayley, as usual, waved and smiled, capturing the hearts of every human in the room. As we walked by, the words “precious” and “adorable” could be heard in conversations. We were cute, and we knew it. Jessica looked up and pointed, tugging at my sleeve for attention. I turned and saw the most beautiful scene in the room. It was a grand three-story cake, decorated with roses, glass doves, and a porcelain bride and groom. Each level was supported by pillars, and there was a waterfall, an actual waterfall, in between layers one and two. It was the most angelic thing I had ever seen. We quickly ran across the wood floor to reach the big beauty. We were almost to it when our mom stepped right in front of us.

“Do not go near that cake.” My mom was a wise woman. We groaned and headed over to the flowered archway instead. Jessica and I stared at the cake with longing. Jessica was the sister who, if there was trouble to be found, it would hit her in the face like a ton of bricks. “There must be a way we could get to it without Mom

seeing,” I thought. So while Mom and Dad were talking to a really old couple, Jessica, Rachel and I snuck over to the cake table with Kayley tottering behind. The cake was even more extravagant up close. I stared at it for a while until I got bored and walked away. Sadly, I had forgotten my sisters. The second I realized it, I heard a crash like a shattering wineglass. I spun around to see an empty cake table, the beautiful white cake now a pile of mush on the floor with Jessica standing right in the middle, cake globs all over her dress. The crowd, once lively, now froze as all eyes turned on us. We were no longer those precious little girls anymore; Jessica had made sure everyone got to see the worst of us. I grabbed Jessica’s hand and quickly shoved her under a stack of chairs in the corner. She was probably still in shock judging from the vacant look on her face.

“Stay down here, or else Dad will kill you.” My hands were shaking as I turned around to look. People approached the cake. Some looked horrified; others looked like they would cry. There was a group of old men sitting in the back who were laughing and pointing. My mom was there in a few seconds with a mop while I still could not see my dad. I turned around, and there he was, glaring down at me.

“Where is Jessica?” His voice was as firm as the hardwood beneath my feet. I shook my head, but he retaliated with the finger. The finger was not a regular finger; I only got the firmly pointed finger when I was being very bad, and it struck fear into the very particles of my being. I pointed, and he walked over, pulling Jessica from her hiding spot. He kept a cool face while we were in the building, but when we were alone in the car, he delivered the ultimate tearjerker. He pulled out the finger once again as he pointed at Jessica and said, “You just ruined the most important day of somebody’s life.” There would be no ice cream after this wedding reception.

I guess you could say the true colors of our family were shown that day. Turns out, the table the cake was sitting on was structurally unstable, and all Jessica had done was set her hands on the table, and it collapsed, but my mom did have to buy the cake topper again for the bride and groom. Now, the story comes up any time we meet an old family friend. “Oh, you’re the girls who knocked down the wedding cake.” Now that is embarrassing.

“An Encounter with Rattlesnakes”

This a humorous, but suspenseful narrative essay. Limiting the time to one afternoon, the place to one property, and the plot to one event makes it more effective. The writer offers concrete detail and description as well as insight into the thoughts that ran through his head as the events unfolded. Therefore, readers can easily imagine both the physical space and the emotional dilemma.

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05 April 2011

An Encounter with Rattlesnakes

What do you do when you're standing in the middle of an open field and someone shouts out to you, "By the way, watch out for Rattlesnakes!?" This was the dilemma I was faced with one overcast Thursday afternoon in June 2009.

While working as a service technician for DIRECTV, I was assigned a service call in Waverly, Tennessee. I arrived at the house at approximately two o'clock in the afternoon, and after logging myself onsite, I introduced myself to the customer who explained the problem. After assessing the situation and determining that the problem was at the satellite dish, I asked the customer to show me where the satellite was located, so he pointed me to a wooded area of his yard. The grass was very tall with trash everywhere. I was very concerned about getting covered by ticks and grass lice, so I sprayed my clothes and shoes thoroughly. I was also concerned about spiders, lizards, scorpions and other reptiles, including snakes. My greatest fear was that I'd run into a frog because I'm terrified of frogs; little did I know that frogs would be the least of my

problems. The dish was mounted about a hundred and fifty feet from his house. I thought, “Who in their right mind did this job?”

There were a lot of trees in the yard, so much so that when I entered the area, the sun became invisible. I entered with great caution. I watched my every step with precise care. I could not help noticing the debris scattered all around the property. I thought, “How can someone live in such filthy surroundings?” When I got about halfway between the house and the dish, the customer shouted out, “Oh, by the way, watch out for rattlesnakes!” At first, I didn’t know whether to believe him or not. He said it so nonchalantly, as though he were joking, so I continued on my way. He then called out again; this time he told me that he had seen a six-foot-long snake climbing over his wooden gate the night before.

I froze; my heart fell to the ground, and suddenly, I felt cold sweat covering my entire body. It was as if I were dreaming. I did not know what to do; I felt like running, but I didn’t know where to run. I thought, “Man, I wish I had a gun or a machete to defend myself in the event I’m attacked by this snake.” After much pondering, I decided to continue on to the satellite. Just then I heard a shuffling in the bushes. I stood still and looked toward the area; there was the largest snake I’d ever seen in my life. Our eyes made four. Here I was face-to-face with a deadly serpent and, to put it mildly, petrified. I started to back up, and the snake started moving towards me. The thought of a lesson in training class flashed across my mind. The trainer had told us, “In the event you encounter a snake, stand still; whatever you do, don’t run.” But I’m almost sure the trainer had never faced a snake like this before. So without any further contemplation, I took off running; I ran as fast as my legs would take me.

While I ran to safety, I felt something wrap around my leg. I tripped and fell and thought I was caught by the snake, so I started to roll around on the ground, bawling at the top of my lungs. It was surreal. I seriously thought I was about to die; fluid was shooting from every part of my body. I literally peed on myself. I finally got loose and ran to safety. As it turned out, the snake did not come after me. I had been tripped by a vine in the bushes. What I had thought was a snake was nothing but a fallen branch from one of the trees. The truth is I almost killed myself because of a dried branch.

When my colleagues heard about my predicament, they laughed me to scorn. The customer found my episode hilarious, so much so that he could hardly contain himself. Needless to say, I had to finish the job. So, in an effort not to cross paths with the snake or its sidekick, the vine, I took a different route to avoid any further encounter with danger.

“The Power of Jealousy”

This narrative essay re-imagines the student’s favorite fairy tale and puts a creative spin on a classic children’s story. As most fairy tales do, this story shares a moral lesson with the audience—beware the power of jealousy, for it can overcome those innocents who may fall victim to its deception—but this fantasy writer chooses to leave his readers with an ending that is grounded in realism to send his message home. Because the story is overflowing with excellent descriptive language, a vivid use of dialogue, and a strong central narrative voice, it could easily be considered a creative writing piece as well as a narrative essay.

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1 October 2010

The Power of Jealousy

For nine years, the Stepmother, the Queen of White Manor, had endured the whims of the child Snow. Now that was over, she knew, for few things could ruin her plan. Beauty brings about the loss of innocence, but Snow White was still far too innocent to foresee the outcome of jealousy’s power.

The night was dying and the sky bleaching when the Stepmother, transformed into a crone, stared across the moors to her victim’s hiding place, a cottage hidden among the heather.

“Bite the apple, dear,” she muttered repetitively, giving power to the words.

The crone smiled and rubbed her knuckles as she heard Snow’s body fall. Though Snow White did not trust her stepmother, she would never have recognized her as this—

aged and withered by sorcery. As the Stepmother grew to her full height with the sunrise and her carmine beauty returned, she traversed the heath towards the little cottage.

The morning-time insects and animals were silent when the Red Queen reached the cottage. One final part of her plan remained since Snow had bitten her poison apple, and she was intent upon seeing the end.

“Come to me, my prince,” the Red Queen whispered before rapping on the door, issuing magic into her words. Inside her head, the Queen saw Snow’s Prince’s eyes open, malachite against the stones of his bedchamber. He would only have to see her once, and her magic would make him fall in lust with her.

The Queen came to the present as the sound of creaking hinges filled her ears. In front of her, the Queen saw seven men, shorter than she and bearing many deformities that would not exist in someone well-bred. In her thoughts, the Red Queen was sneering, but before these men, she fell and began to beg. She asked if a girl had been seen, one with skin fairer than she—for Snow was not mulatto, and the Queen was—with lips the color of innocent blood, hair like washed obsidian, and eyes to anger cobalt.

In the twilit morning, the Red Queen’s caramel skin, violent crimson hair, and doe eyes entranced the short men. She stared into each set of eyes and saw her magic ensnaring her victims—instant coquetry. She was ushered gallantly into the cottage by the septet.

For a moment, the Queen felt like moaning as she saw Snow lying on the oak-carved table. The Queen had wanted this from the first moment she had seen her late husband with his daughter, Snow. Since Snow’s first moments of womanly beauty, and

since men's eyes had begun to look past the Queen and upon Snow, she knew this must happen. The Red Queen knew Snow must die.

The Queen was in the cottage for only a moment when the sound of hooves shattered the silence. Seven sets of eyes turned to the Queen in fear.

"All is well," the Red Queen solaced them. "It is only the Prince, Snow's beloved."

A collective sigh passed through the little men, for they did not hear the sneer in the Queen's genteel voice, nor did they know what would next come to pass.

The door to the cottage was thrown from its hinges, and the most regal man stepped inside, followed by his guard. Loose hair flowed around the man's face, and his iridescent eyes seemed to illuminate the cottage. The moment he saw her, the Prince fell before the Queen with a sigh.

The Queen lowered her eyes to the prince before her, satisfaction flowing within her bosom.

"Rise," she whispered so only he could hear. "Go to your beloved and kiss her lips. Wake her for the final act. Do not tarry, though, before you return to me."

The prince did as she said without hesitation. As Snow's eyes opened, and she peeked through her lashes, the prince's back was already turned from her.

Immediately, the Red Queen began to chant:

"Eyes blue as sea in storm,
Lips red as flesh kissed by thorn,
Make her fall on bended knee
As her heart begins to bleed.
Draw her to death;
Bless her with final breath."

A scream rang through the cottage as the incarnadine light of sunrise filtered through the cottage windows. Snow's last heartbeat was audible to all in that passing second.

Jealousy is the consequence and danger of immense beauty, and Snow White was too innocent to predict the lengths to which jealousy would push her stepmother. That fallacy in her logic became her death.

The Queen wrapped her arms around her prince and smiled a lust-filled grin of triumph. And they lived wickedly ever after.

Writing Process Essays

Most of us are familiar with cooking instructions and how-to guides for craft construction. These are often written in a telegraphic style with an implied second person voice: “Take one yard cotton and cut into 6” squares.” Usually these instructions follow a kind of chronological order in that we begin with the first steps and we end with the completed casserole or throw-pillow.

The process essay similarly endeavors to direct or inform the reader, but in full sentences, ordered paragraphs, and often with precise descriptions and examples. For this reason, many instructors disallow recipes and craft instructions from the range of possible topics. Students are encouraged to write about one of their special skills. The first step is to realize that their audience lacks their expertise. Just as a teacher must present information at an accessible level in the classroom, the writer of the process essay must keep the reader’s abilities in mind at every turn. Depending on the technical level of their topic, writers must accommodate their readers’ unfamiliarity with technical terms, tools, machinery, procedures, and professional jargon, and integrate definition and clear description where needed. Writers of the process essay must also make an appeal to the reader’s curiosity and, furthermore, must convince the reader that the process they are about to read about will be valuable knowledge for them.

There are two types of process essay: *informative* and *directive*. The *informative* process essay outlines the steps taken in the accomplishment of a goal. Examples of informative process topics are: “How Birds Teach their Young,” “How the Human Liver Cleanses the Blood Stream,” “How the School Newspaper is Printed,” and in a more

humorous vein, “How Women Shop at a Shopping Mall” and “How Men Shop at a Shopping Mall.” Note that the informative process essay is usually written in third person and has a general reader in mind.

The second category is the *directive* process essay. These often address the reader directly in second person. Suggested directive process topics include “How to Shop for a Used Car or Truck,” “How to Behave on a First Date,” “How to Lose Weight,” or, for more tongue-in-cheek topics, “How to Flunk out of School” and “How to Go Broke.” In the specific assignment for the essay that appears in this publication, students were encouraged to consider lighthearted topics and be sarcastic or ironic in tone if they felt like it.

Quick Tips for Students:

1. Organizing these essays is a real challenge for many students, but most find the process essay quite manageable if they see a chronological order of steps and prepare an outline before beginning to write. For many students, preparing outlines will become a solid option for process papers.
2. Students will find it easier to narrow their topic choices and to develop the content of their essay if they have a clear understanding of the audience to whom they are writing. Take time during your prewriting stages to decide who needs to know how to complete the process about which you are writing and who would have an interest in it so that you’ll know how to approach the topic.

“How I Cut the Cord”

In this process analysis essay, the writer explains the process to obtain access to television programming and movies at a minimum cost. The paper is organized in chronological order and provides clear step-by-step instructions in a humorous way. The metaphor of “cutting the cord” alludes to acquiring independence at various levels that go from finding new horizons in life to taking a leading role in the fight for freedom from big corporations.

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05 April 2011

How I Cut the Cord

Last August, I decided to quit my job as a satellite installer and go back to school. This decision came with great sacrifice. Aside from giving up a fifty-five-thousand-dollars-a-year salary, I also lost a very lucrative benefits package. One of the most significant benefits was that I didn't have to pay for TV service, which turned out to be very expensive. By the time September's bill arrived, I realized that I could no longer afford the payments. Therefore, I went searching for an alternative after my service was disconnected for non-payment. It was then that I discovered that I had the ultimate solution right before my very eyes all along: Free TV! Yes, you read it correctly. It was free TV with absolutely no strings attached. If we can obtain TV for nothing, why do we pay so much for the service?

I reduced my bill by following a few simple steps. First, I bought a digital antenna from the electronics department at Wal-Mart; the cost was approximately thirty dollars, but there are antennas as low as ten dollars. After following the setup instructions

included with the product, I proceeded with my TV set-up. This process will vary depending on the type of television. For instance, if you have a Hi-definition (HD) TV, you'll connect the antennas directly to the TV's built-in cable-to-antenna input (which can be found on the back, side, or bottom of the TV set depending on the brand). Next, from the TV remote control, select the menu. Choose the tuner mode and change the mode from cable to antenna; go next to auto scan and press select. This process will take about a minute. Once the scan is completed, you will notice the number of digital and analog channels that are detected. You should receive approximately thirty-four channels total, including thirty-one digital and three analog.

Second, if you own an analog TV (an older box television), you will need a digital converter box (DTV box) to make this transition. This process is similar to the before-mentioned process with one exception: instead of connecting the antenna directly to the TV, you will connect it to the converter box. This step could be more complicated and may require some knowledge of cable set-up. However, the antenna comes with written step-by-step instructions. There is also an eight-hundred number available which you can call for assistance. After completing the setup and scanning process, it is time to enjoy your free TV service, compliments of the United States government, a service paid for in part by us, the taxpayers. The thirty-four available channels both in crystal clear HD and one hundred percent digital quality (standard definition) include ABC, NBC, CBS, FOX, My TV30, CW, TBN ,TCC, and ION TV, just to name a few. These are the same channels offered by cable companies as basic cable for a whopping ten dollars a month plus tax, and if you want to see them in HD, you will have to pay an additional ten dollars.

Third, I signed up for Netflix service. This is an online TV service that can be broadcasted through several mediums, and it includes streaming via an internet-capable blu-ray player, a Wii game system, Xbox or Play-Station, or directly to an internet-capable TV. This service can also be viewed on your computer. Netflix offers a large variety of TV shows and movies at the very low price of eight dollars a month. Hulu is another service available. Hulu is owned and operated by Universal Studios Inc. or NBC Inc. This is free online if you watch it on your computer. However, if you desire to stream this service to your TV, it is available through your blu-ray player or internet-capable TV at a reasonable price of eight dollars a month and all in crystal-clear HD signal. Another advantage about this service is the ability to watch whatever you want at your convenience at no additional cost. You can pause and rewind live programs without a DVR (digital video recorder), and above all, you can take your service with you when you travel.

In conclusion, this transition is not for everyone. If you're an avid sports fan, this might not be for you. If you are a fervent twenty-four hour news viewer, this will not be suitable to you. It is for people who are tired of paying an arm and a leg for TV service, those who choose to be informed, and those who want to take control of their finances. It is for individuals who aren't addicted to television and those who lead busy lives, people who find it absolutely ludicrous to pay hundreds of dollars a year for a service they rarely use and who may benefit from the alternative. I made the change and reduced my monthly bill from two hundred and fifteen dollars a month to eight dollars. This might sound too good to be true, but it is true. This transition is simple. All you have to do is take these steps, and you will not regret it. Like any other service, this

transformation might produce a few problems; for instance, your antenna will work as well as your setup. Netflix and Hulu service will be as fast as the internet speed you have, so if you have dial-up service, online TV might not work. Finally, if done right, this transition could be one of the best decisions you will ever make. Go ahead and try it. Cut the cord! After all, what do have to lose?

Writing Comparison/Contrast Essays

Examining our world in terms of comparison and contrast is one of the most common intellectual activities we do on a day-to-day basis; it's the kind of thinking on which most practical decisions are based. These may be big decisions—choosing a college, buying a car, deciding on a career—or small decisions, such as what kind of shampoo to buy or where to go for pizza. In all of these activities, we are doing mental work—logically examining the information available to us and making a decision based on that information. This decision results in our choice between two or more items or in our passing judgment on objects that are similar in some way, though not in all ways. In writing a comparison/contrast essay, we strive for the same goal except that in our writing, we explain the reasons behind our judgment to an audience outside of ourselves.

When writing comparison/contrast essays, we compare items to help our audience understand our choices or judgments. The audience comes to understand why we make the choices we do or come to a certain conclusion because we offer them the information that we have examined in order to come to that conclusion, information which they may or may not have had before reading our comparison. Many times, then, our purpose in writing is also to help people understand something with which they are not familiar. In such cases, we compare an object unfamiliar to the audience with something familiar to them, forming a basis of comparison so that they can understand the type of object we are examining even if they have not directly encountered it in their own lives. Ultimately, we write comparison/contrast essays to

share our knowledge about a subject with others and to persuade them to understand the subject in the way that we do, thus seeing our judgment as valid.

We make our judgment reasonable to our audience by deciding on specific points of comparison to ensure that we analyze our items based on the same criteria or standards for each item. For us, as writers, to set these criteria, the items we compare must be on the same level in some way; choosing items that are too different from one another makes it difficult to set standards that your audience would expect from both items. In our writing, we explain the similarities and differences between the items that we are comparing, illustrating how well those items live up to the expectations we have set for them. We pass judgment on the items, usually expressing a preference for one or noting the advantages of one over the other. This judgment is most explicitly stated in the essay's thesis, and writers support that judgment by comparing and/or contrasting the items in the essay's body paragraphs based on the criteria that we have previously set forth.

Quick Tips for Students:

1. Stick to two items for comparison and contrast because it's easier to manage.
2. Make sure that your items are comparable or are "on the same level."
3. Avoid vague thesis statements such as "There are many similarities between item A and item B." The audience cannot understand your perspective on or your judgment about those items based on this kind of thesis.
4. Understand that you may focus more on similarities *or* on differences; you do not have to treat both equally in your essay. However, even if you're focusing more on one than on the other, you should include at least one consideration of difference or similarity to show your objectivity towards the subject and your understanding of the ultimate connection between the objects you are comparing.

“Movies: In a Theater or at Home”

This student essay compares two similar activities in a straightforward, point-by-point method. It gives the reader specific examples for support such as the “make-out couple” and the “ninety-year old couple” who may sit nearby in the theater. Many of us can relate to these examples. In general teachers ask students to avoid “you” in essays; however, the writer here speaks directly to his reader, and it works well for his essay.

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14 February 2011

Movies: In a Theater or at Home

Explosions, laughter, and the occasional tear could describe the viewing experience of most movies today. Movies are a vital part of our everyday culture. Without these, life would seem tasteless and plain. Films can shape your mind, even without your knowing it, or give you a wonderful feeling like no other. However, there is nothing worse than watching a terrible movie. It is an awful experience. It makes you wish that you could rip those two hours of extreme boredom straight back from time itself. Other times, it might not be the movie that is the problem; maybe the reason the experience is so frustrating is your surroundings while watching the film. The way you enjoy a movie is based on the atmosphere in which it is watched: either in a theater or at home.

First, the actual viewing experience is a major part in the entertainment you get out of a movie. While watching a movie in a theater, the video and audio quality is unbeatable. The massive screen displaying gigantic, heart-jumping explosions is almost impossible to duplicate. The immaculate surround sound will make even the toughest

man scream in a terrifying horror movie. On the other hand, a movie at home does not contain nearly as much sound or visual quality as theaters, which is essential in thoroughly grasping the effect of a film. Yet at home, you have the ability to pause and rewind a part that you either missed or want to see again. For example, if you feel as if your bladder is about to explode, you had better hope that you are at home, compared to a theater where you are forced to hold it in until the movie ends, as if you were in captivity. Another comparison of the two is the wait. Naturally, we need satisfaction immediately. A theater can offer this instant gratification. For example, if the hottest new movie were in the theaters, you would want to go see it. If you were restricted to only watching movies at home, the wait would be around six months. That is entirely absurd. By the time the movie comes out in stores, you might have completely lost your interest in the movie altogether.

Next, comfort is the key to enjoying a movie properly. In a theater, the seats are stiff and rigid. Every time you stand up at the end of the movie, your body screams at you to stretch and move around. The constricting space is terrible, especially if you are claustrophobic. Your joints are locked up, and yet you are trapped. When leaving, you are forced to suffer longer than you have to while the ninety-year-old couple next to you takes hours to get out of the row. Also, for some reason, theaters are always freezing. You always wish that you had brought a bigger jacket about five minutes into the movie once it is too late. All of this can be avoided with a movie in the luxury of your own home. It is a glorious feeling to be curled up on your couch, have a blanket covering you, and be wearing your favorite pajamas. Comfort coincides with the company that you are with. In a theater, you risk being around obnoxious annoyances. It is so

distracting to sit next to the make-out couple, the loud person on the phone, the boisterous laughter, or the infamous crying baby. It has happened to everyone. While at your own home, you are with people that you know and love. Any movie is made better when surrounded by close friends.

Third, the overall cost between the two is an easy comparison. Theaters charge roughly eight dollars, maybe more for admission. Plus, if you are hungry at a theater, you are forced to shell out a fortune simply for a drink, popcorn, or some candy. This is a travesty. On the other hand, you are able to rent a movie for a fraction of the cost at home. Also, you can keep the movie for several days in case you would like to watch it again or show a friend. The food choices at home are infinite. You can make anything your taste buds desire at any time.

In conclusion, the two ways to watch a movie both have their positives and negatives. Theaters have unbeatable sound and visual quality, compared to the simply average alternative at home. However, theaters cannot offer anywhere near the amount of comfort that your own home can offer. Movies at home also dominate the competition in the price category. The only way to decide between the two is to figure out which positive characteristic is most important to you.

“The Good Life”

This comparison essay painfully evokes, through well-selected contrasts between the narrator’s childhood experiences and those of his peers, how easily we often misperceive the reality of others’ lives and fail to appreciate the blessings in our own. The writer skillfully transports us back to the austere existence he endured growing up in a wealthy Jamaican household in which material abundance masked a family’s chilling emotional abuse. The compelling first-person voice inspires readers to identify with the narrator’s plight, highlighting his poignant isolation and frustration with his peers’ false perceptions. The gulf between the narrator’s harsh home-life and the casual warmth of his friends’ homes is emphasized by the parallel structure in which the contrasting details are presented. The essay ends with a troubling thought: perhaps we understand others’ suffering more than we allow ourselves to acknowledge because it is easier to believe in a pleasant fantasy than to confront an uncomfortable reality.

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The Good Life

Whitney Houston in one her famous songs says, “I believe the children are our future. Teach them well and let them lead the way. Show them all the beauty they possess inside. Give them a sense of pride to make it easier” Growing up, for many people, is considered the greatest time of their lives. It is seen as a time of joy and happiness, a time of peace and tranquility—a simpler time, if you will. For me, growing up was rather antagonistic. I was raised in Jamaica by a wealthy family. This was the result of my mother’s abandonment of me, her only child. Life in this house, from the perspective of my peers, was very good; they thought that I had it all: the big house, the fancy cars, the plush landscape. They perceived me as one of the luckiest people alive, someone who was living “the good life.” My friends, Mark and Keith, thought I was

“the man.” They would often say, “Man, I wish I was in your shoes.” Little did they know that the lifestyle I led was completely different from what they imagined. In fact, what they considered an illustrious dream was in actuality a nightmare.

Although I lived in a wealthy home, I was severely restricted. I wasn't allowed to do things that most of my peers took for granted. For instance, I was not allowed to eat at the family table during dinner time. I had to sit in the kitchen on a stool. I had to eat from a plastic plate and drink from a plastic cup. In fact, I was treated as an outsider or a servant, not a son. In contrast, my friends Mark and Keith lived with their parents and received all the love and attention that they deserved. They were able to sit wherever they chose to, free to eat whatever they wanted and from whichever plate they desired. I wasn't allowed to use the washing machine or dryer; instead I had to wash my clothes in an old metal tub and hang them outside to dry. Mark's and Keith's moms would do their laundry. I was denied the opportunity to sleep on a mattress; instead I was given a piece of carpet which I laid on an old twin spring bed frame. Meanwhile, my buddies had fully furnished rooms with TVs and computers. I didn't have these luxuries until I became an adult and was able to purchase my own. These are just a few of the disparities that I encountered as a child. So one could understand why I felt offended and upset when my friends Mark and Keith dared to suggest that I had it made.

Mark lived with his mother and father and appeared to be in a loving and caring family. They treated their kids very well, so much so that I was often jealous of their closeness. Mark's mother was very kind-hearted; she was one of the first people who made me feel like a human being. My parents, on the other hand, detested me. They would give me nice things but say it was like dressing a pig. My dad would always say, “I

think we're wasting powder on a black bird!" This was euphemism for "a Negro will always be inferior no matter how much you dress him up."

Mark and Keith, like many young adults their age, could not fathom how well they had it. They were so obsessed with material wealth that they could not appreciate the wealth of love and support they had in their own homes. Even though my friends' parents weren't rich, they had something that I dreamed of, a caring family. They had parents who supported their dreams and went above and beyond their financial abilities to ensure their kids' happiness. My parents went above and beyond to ensure I was miserable. Mark and Keith had it all, but they were misinformed. They had endless privileges, but their ideals were twisted: they had the perfect life, but they lacked the capacity to acknowledge it. My friends' jealousy of me was misguided. I wish they had known that they had the good life and that I did not.

Another key point in the saga involved school. I loved school because school was the only place where I had some solace. I remember how happy I was while school was in session. I would laugh and play and have as much fun as possible. I was considered the class clown and would joke about some of the absurdities that my parents would say to me. Comedy served as a conduit that helped me release the tension that I had to face when I returned home. On the flip-side, my friends hated school. They found my fondness for school horrendous. While they awaited the end of the school day with great enthusiasm, I was petrified of the sound of the bell. Of course, Mark and Keith were going home to a paradise. They had a routine in which they could have a snack if dinner wasn't ready and could head to their rooms to either watch TV or play one of their electronic games. I, on the other hand, would head home to hell, to be terrorized about

something. My routine consisted of feeding the dogs, cats and pigs, doing my homework, taking out the trash, taking a bath, preparing my clothes for the next day, and then finally getting my meal from the pot everyone else had eaten from and sitting in my little corner to eat. Afterwards I would clean up the kitchen (even though we had a live-in maid); then it was off to bed, usually around seven o'clock.

Finally, it seems as though my friends and I led entirely opposite lives. They had parents who threw birthday parties; I had parents who conveniently forgot my birthday every year. They had parents who supported their dreams; I had parents who prohibited me from dreaming. Mark and Keith had a family who cared deeply about them, but for some peculiar reason they could not appreciate it. If only they knew how difficult it had been for me, maybe they would have thought twice about envying me. On the other hand, I believe that these guys knew what I was going through. I'm convinced that while they might have been too young to fully comprehend the magnitude of my quandaries, they were old enough to at least sympathize with me. Instead, they elected not to see my pain, but rather to focus on the mythological "good life" I had.

**SECTION 2:
RESEARCHED ESSAYS USING
ONE TO FOUR SOURCES**

“Civil Rights: Segregation Is Dead, Isn’t It?” – Prize Winner

Does the name “Looby” sound familiar? Here’s a hint: one of the theaters at the Tennessee Performing Arts Center is named for him, as is a public library in Nashville. Yet many people know little or nothing about Zephaniah Alexander Looby, a man who used his talents and resources to make an enormous contribution to the civil rights of Tennesseans. Ironically, according to Gena Robinson, the author of this essay, even the staff of the library named for Looby could provide little information about this man. Still, Robinson persevered in researching him and provided an excellent account of Looby’s life work. Her final product is an interesting, informative account of a man who made a difference for Tennesseans.

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24 March 2011

Civil Rights: Segregation Is Dead, Isn’t It?

In a post-war era of freedoms and the promise of simple southern living, for a percentage of the population, the South was anything but free. For much of society, day-to-day life appeared to model a Norman Rockwell depiction of serenity--unless one had a darker skin color. For that segment of the population, life was not simple. It did not just appear to be complex and convoluted; it *was* complex and convoluted. As a result of the historical mistreatment of blacks and inequalities that prevailed throughout the country, the civil rights movement erupted in the southern states. Blacks were in need of support. That support came in the form of an exceptionally selfless man: Z. Alexander Looby, who impacted an entire generation by continued dedication to improving the quality of life for blacks by fighting for their basic rights with financial support and representation in court.

Though not a native to Tennessee, Z. Alexander Looby eagerly pursued many avenues to improve the quality of life for southern blacks. According to Bobby Lovett and Linda Wynn, Looby himself had experienced racial inequities throughout his life. He was born Zephaniah Alexander Looby on April 8, 1899, in Antigua, British West Indies. His mother, Grace Elizabeth Looby, died when he was a young boy, and his father, John Alexander Looby, died when Zephaniah was a teenager. Looby was then on his own, so in 1914 at age 15, he boarded a whaling vessel as part of the crew and headed for the United States. He jumped ship in New Bedford, Massachusetts. He worked many odd jobs, but his desire since boyhood was to become educated. His passion was reading. Even in early childhood as he attended court sessions in Antigua, his ambition was to be an attorney himself (Lovett and Wynn). He went on to receive his B.A. from Howard University in 1922. Looby earned a Bachelor of Law degree in 1925 from Columbia University, and then in 1926, he earned a Doctor of Juristic Science from New York University. He was admitted to the Tennessee bar in 1929. Looby was employed by Fisk University as assistant professor of economics until 1928 when he moved to Memphis, Tennessee, and established his law practice.

The twenty-year period from 1948 through 1968 was considered the civil rights movement. African-Americans of all ages, including a percentage of young college students, began public demonstrations of protest against segregation. Even a few white Americans were involved in the fight for equal rights. A variety of non-violent actions such as sit-ins, boycotts, and marches became the preferred method of protest. The message was clear: blacks were no longer willing to be treated as an inferior race. The movement spread like wildfire and created an opportunity for networking amongst

prominent blacks throughout the South. It also bridged the gap between those prominent blacks and the less fortunate blacks who needed support and representation. Researcher Bobby L. Lovett suggests that the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was a strong presence during the years of the movement. Though the student protests in Nashville were of a non-violent nature, they often led to arrests. This created a financial burden to those students needing to post bail. Looby, along with other black businessmen, assisted with organizing funding to post bail for those arrested during these protests. Looby was a member of the NAACP and served on its board of directors. He was also affiliated with the Legal Defense and Education Fund, a separate tax-exempt, public-interest legal organization that would become the legal arm of the civil rights movement (Lovett 6). This financial support allowed the protesters to continue pursuing what whites considered the most common of civil rights. Some of the most impactful protests were for rights as simple as receiving service at a lunch counter. To avoid violence and the appearance of segregation, many restaurant owners would simply close when the blacks would enter and sit at the counters. They avoided serving blacks, but as a result of their heedless acts, they were unable to serve whites either (Lovett 133). During this era, the law was often ignored, or at best, it was stretched to suit the racist, uncultured, and lawless members of law enforcement. Many still believed blacks had no rights.

According to Bobby L. Lovett, Alexander Looby also provided financial support with his involvement in founding Kent College of Law in Nashville in 1933. His belief that there was a dire need for “real good” black attorneys and that blacks should have the opportunity for higher education led to the opening of the only black school of its

kind. More than ninety students would study at Kent University, and thirty-seven percent would pass the bar exam, by 1947. The school, however, became a victim of wartime shortages and conscriptions. With so many potential students in military service, it had to close before the end of World War II (Lovett 3).

There was virtually no legal protection for blacks in the South before or during the civil rights years. Many blacks lived tumultuous lives filled with fear and segregation. Even daily tasks had to be carefully planned to consider the route to be taken as well as the time of day since the hours from dusk to daybreak were considered exceptionally dangerous times for blacks. When blacks were beaten and murdered, often no effort was made to bring the guilty to justice. Instead, the facts were twisted, manipulated, and more often than not, the guilt fell on the victim(s). In the unlikely event there was an arrest, if the party who committed the crime against a black individual was white, he or she was quickly acquitted.

Looby's fervent work for desegregation and equality for blacks landed him in the middle of the biggest legal case of the time. Writer Bobby L. Lovett recalls the events of the Columbia Tennessee Race Riots that erupted in February of 1946. A violent encounter occurred after a black man accompanied his mother to a local repair shop, owned by whites, to return a radio to be repaired properly or have the money refunded. The argument became heated, and the black man and his mother found themselves being attacked by the twenty-eight-year-old white man. This attack drew other whites from nearby to gang up on the man and his mother. The two blacks were arrested and charged with assault. They made bail and were arrested again for attempted murder. Because of the histrionics of the times, the assault on the blacks preceded an onslaught by

whites on Columbia's black residence and business districts. Blacks recalled the recent lynchings in a nearby county and prepared for war. Despite explicit warnings from armed blacks which stated they would defend their neighborhoods, the whites, including four white police officers, continued the forward mob into the black neighborhoods with the intent to destroy what was in their path. Local state patrolmen even proceeded to arm the mob as "deputies" (Lovett 18-19). As Will Sarvis has noted, not surprisingly the melee was brought to an end by the National Guard and resulted in many being injured, including those four police officers. Thirty-four black men were jailed, and twenty-five black men were charged with various crimes, including murder, related to the violence (Sarvis).

Looby was selected by the NAACP to the legal defense team along with Maurice Weaver, a white labor attorney, and Thurgood Marshall. Walter White, arriving on the scene from NAACP headquarters in New York, is quoted in the March 8, 1946 *Nashville Globe* as saying this:

This is no ordinary case. Unless they receive outside aid, unless the country is aroused to condemn the kind of thing that took place in Columbia, Negro citizens of small communities throughout the nation will be helpless. The NAACP intends to give the defendants complete and uncompromising legal defense. We appeal for contributions. (qtd. in Lovett 19)

Looby's legal defense helped acquit twenty-three of the twenty-five defendants; later one more was acquitted, and the other remaining defendant received a commuted sentence of one year. This was despite the cases' being tried before all-white jurors. After the acquittal of twenty-three remaining defendants, a local prosecutor, angry at the acquittal,

challenged Looby to a common fistfight. However, Looby calmly stated, “We came to Columbia to have a contest of brains not brawn” (qtd. in Lovett 20).

Throughout his legal career Looby would advocate for equal rights, primarily in the field of education, including equal pay for teachers (Lovett 6). Looby, along with fellow attorneys Carl Cowan and Leon A. Ransom, filed suit against The University of Tennessee in Knoxville in November 1939, using several local qualified Negro candidates for admission to UT’s graduate programs. The suit was filed in state court in Knoxville. For the lawsuit, *State et rel. Michael et al v. Witham et al*, Ransom recalls that poorly educated locals acted as if they had never seen Negro lawyers in suits and ties “talking to the judge like they were white people” (qtd. in Lovett 6). A police officer was so upset about this bizarre social phenomenon that he struck Ransom, but the judge did nothing about it (Lovett 6).

In 1940, large crowds and representatives of the Knoxville NAACP chapter entered the Knoxville Chancery Court to hear Looby, Ransom, and Cowan argue the *Michael* case against the University of Tennessee. State Attorney General Roy Beeler was present to represent Tennessee. Cowan sought a writ of mandamus (warrant) to force the officials to admit the Negro students named in the suit to graduate and law programs. However, the judge dismissed the case, declaring that the plaintiffs’ lawyers should have sued the UT trustees as a corporate body. The decision to file the case in state court, rather than federal district court, had proved to be a mistake, and it was one from which the NAACP lawyers would learn as they pursued later cases (Lovett 8).

Though the civil rights era was a time of violence and oppression, it was also a time of hope. Looby continued his life’s work in defending black America and the

advancement of desegregation in a variety of court cases. He became the hero of the day to many and the proverbial “thorn” to yet others. Bobby Lovett reports that on April 19, 1960, Looby’s Meharry Boulevard home was destroyed by dynamite. The bombing destroyed eighty-five percent of his home and shattered 147 windows at the nearby Meharry Medical College across the street. Amazingly, the Looby family escaped unhurt. The attack on Looby and his family evoked the protest of many citizens. Approximately 5,000 people quickly gathered at the A&I (now Tennessee State University) campus, merged with another group near the Looby home, and marched two abreast on the sidewalks to City Hall. The spokesman for the group demanded that the mayor speak about his position on segregation. The mayor responded that he thought racial discrimination was wrong and that integration should take place (Lovett 138-139).

Looby also viewed politics as a way to change an oppressive system. In 1951, he and fellow attorney Robert E. Lillard became the first blacks to be elected to the city council since 1911. In 1962, he ran for a seat on the Tennessee Supreme Court, but lost. In 1963, Looby became a member of the Metropolitan Charter Commission. In 1971, he retired after serving on the old city council and the new Metropolitan Council for a combined total of twenty years (Lovett and Wynn).

Looby died on March 24, 1972. On October 8, 1982, the Nashville Bar Association, whose white members had denied Alexander Looby's membership application in the 1950s, posthumously granted a certificate of membership in his name. His contributions to Afro-American Nashville are recognized in the Z. Alexander Looby Library and Community Center erected by the city on Metro Center Boulevard (Lovett and Wynn).

Unfortunately, there are still cases being fought in courts across the country today for equal rights. It is unfortunate that there is still a need for the fight. Today brings discussions on whether or not there is still a need for affirmative action. Though segregation has been abolished in the public eye, it seems to be in existence behind many closed doors. The fight continues for equal employment opportunities, equal pay, and equal education. We continue to see videos of police violence against minority racial backgrounds and the whole evolution of “racial profiling.” It appears the support Zephaniah Alexander Looby offered to the citizens of the civil rights era is still needed by the citizens of today.

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“Tennessee Sit-Ins”

In “Tennessee Sit-Ins,” the writer orients readers to a pivotal moment in Tennessee history in which a group of determined protesters staged a successful nonviolent resistance movement that advanced the cause of racial equality. Scholarly and reference sources are used to establish the history of the sit-ins and to advance a thesis about an ironic cause-and-effect phenomenon: segregationists’ violent reaction to peaceful protests is what ultimately helped to spur fundamental changes in Tennessee law. This essay is a good example of effective focus: by limiting his scope to the story of the Tennessee sit-ins and their local impact, the writer provides a window into the larger story of how nonviolent resistance techniques functioned in the Civil Rights Movement to effect change in the nation as a whole.

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Tennessee Sit-Ins

The power and impact of the sit-ins during the Civil Rights Movement are largely attributed to the Greensboro sit-in in North Carolina on Feb. 1, 1960 (“Sit-ins Sweep”). While this sit-in did cause the quickest reaction of anti-segregation, it was not the sit-in most responsible for actual change. That role belonged to the sit-ins in Tennessee. The Tennessee sit-ins were powerful because of the sympathy put into many white people’s hearts when they saw how violently other whites were treating the African Americans during their peaceful protests.

The basic purpose of a sit-in is to create awareness for a cause by occupying, or sitting, in an area with a direct relation to the cause. In the case of the Tennessee protesters, and all other protesters during the Civil Rights Movement, the cause was

equal rights, and the places were drugstores, lunch counters, and other places typically off-limits to African Americans. Sit-ins are known to be successful because they are peaceful; African Americans chose this peaceful form of protest to prove to whites that it was not supremacy they were fighting for, just equality. However, once they got deep into the protests, the peacefulness was very one-sided.

Before the Tennessee sit-ins began, the Nashville Christian Leadership Conference (NCLC) was founded in order to train people how to behave during a sit-in. The first of these workshops, where the participants learned nonviolent procedures, was held on March 26-28, 1958 (Lovett and Wynn).

It is important to note that Tennessee, Nashville in particular, was one of the most progressive places in the South. Bobby Lovett and Linda T. Wynn state that “a few blacks served on the Board of Education, the city council, and the police force....” However, although not all whites agreed with the idea of segregation, they accepted it by calling it tradition or “the Southern way of life” (Frazier 32). The people in favor of segregation had a louder voice for the time being and were in charge of the social structure.

In late 1959, the protesters began their peaceful fight. They targeted their sit-ins at bus terminals, variety stores, Walgreen's drugstore, and department stores (Lovett and Wynn). The initial sit-ins were relatively successful and even spread a ripple of response into the North. In many northern states, college students could be found protesting at stores that were discriminating in the South (Frazier 39).

The success and peacefulness of the protests could not last forever, though, and on Feb. 27 the fighting began, according to the *New York Times*:

First, a white youth attacked another white youth who was sitting beside a Negro girl at McClellan's counter after getting no reaction when he called the fraternizing white a "nigger-lover."

Second, a white man attacked a Negro student after having received no reaction when he repeatedly blew cigar smoke into the student's face.

Third, a group of white boys attacked two Negro demonstrators after receiving no response during remarks. A third demonstrator was pushed down the stairs in the accompanying confusion. (qtd. in Frazier 39)

This one-sided violence alarmed many whites, even more so when eighty-one African Americans were arrested for violence even though they had remained peaceful during the outbursts from the pro-segregation whites (Lovett and Wynn). Many whites who had never been in favor of segregation but were too afraid to do something about it were impressed by the blacks' willingness to remain unresponsive during the violence and felt that segregation should be ended immediately (Frazier 39).

The sympathy the whites finally felt for African Americans eventually led to change. To see the innocent protestors be brutally beaten for fighting for a worthy cause made the message clearer than ever before. On March 3, a committee was appointed in Nashville to investigate the issues. This committee is significant because it consisted of both white and black members (Lovett and Wynn). At last, African Americans were allowed a chance to fight for the cause they so strongly believed in. It was not this committee, however, that led directly to desegregation. The final ruling was that lunch counters would be split down the middle for blacks at one end and whites at the other. This decision was not approved by the NCLC (Lovett and Wynn).

A few months later, as a result of more protests and meetings, the biracial committee finally settled on a decision that everyone could agree upon. During the week of May 8, all lunch counters in Nashville were opened to whites and blacks alike. Soon after, more and more public places became open to blacks. According to Lisa L. Zagumny, "Theatres, restaurants, hotels, lunch counters, hospitals, city-owned parks and pools had begun to desegregate, but government jobs remained more restricted to whites" (51). There was still a long way to go in terms of complete equality, but this opening of public places was a definite start.

The Civil Rights Movement sit-ins were the cause of a great change that occurred in the country. It is interesting, though, that the sit-ins probably would not have been as successful had the one-sided violence not broken out. The violence many whites forced onto the innocent African Americans led to sympathy other whites felt, and it was this sympathy that led more people than ever before to believe a great change was needed.

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SECTION 3:
RESEARCHED ESSAYS USING
FIVE OR MORE SOURCES

Writing Cause/Effect Essays

Oftentimes we find ourselves in a situation, wondering how we got there, why certain events have happened, or what the results of our own actions will be. These are situations where we examine issues of cause and effect. We consider whose actions were responsible for the situation, why the person or group acted as they did, and what consequences result from those actions. In a similar respect, when writing a cause and effect essay, we are working to determine and explain reasons for behaviors, actions, or beliefs and the consequences of situations that arise because of those behaviors, actions, or beliefs.

When searching for reasons why something happened or why a situation exists, we usually find a variety of causes that are interconnected, albeit by a remote connection at times. Our purpose when writing a cause/effect essay, then, is to unravel the mystery of the causal relationship between events or happenings first for ourselves, and then for our audience. We write to explain what did or might occur, and why. Because it is not likely that a situation is the result of only a few causes—nor will there be only a few people affected by a situation or decision that is worthy of our writing—we must be sure to narrow our focus so that our subject is manageable based on the assignment's requirements. A cause/effect essay must thoroughly and reasonably discuss each cause and explain the logical connection between those causes in order to illustrate their effects on a certain person or group. Similarly, since one particular action (cause) may result in effects on any number of people in a number of ways, we need to narrow our subject for our writing to a few effects, while still recognizing the ongoing possibilities for other consequences. Any time we find a number of apparent causes or effects, then, we should

weigh them against one another and assign each a level of importance so that when we write, we may choose the most closely related causes and effects and create a thesis statement that clearly explains to our audience the connection between the most relevant causes and effects.

Another way to keep your essay focused is to consider who would and who would not agree with you; then, consider why. If there is widespread disagreement over causes or effects, you might need to go a bit further in your examination of causes and effects in order to be clear and accurate in your interpretation of the situation while also treating others' opinions fairly. Once you have determined who your audience is and on what level they will agree with you, develop your subject by describing the event or situation for which you are explaining causes and effects, offering information on who is responsible for the situation and why, what beliefs they hold, what types of decisions they have made to cause the situation, when these decisions occurred, and where those people who are affected can be found. Organize your information into paragraphs by setting a goal for each paragraph: answer one question per paragraph, and order your paragraphs to offer cause(s) before effect(s).

Quick Tips for Students:

1. Beware of confusing coincidence with cause. There always needs to be a logical, explainable relationship between your causes and effects, and you'll need to be able to discuss that relationship in your essay.
2. Do not oversimplify causes by failing to recognize their full number and complexity. Show in your writing that you recognize that the causes you are

outlining there are not the only ones although they are the most important to your argument or your point of view.

3. Do not assume that because one thing preceded another, they are directly or causally related. Cause and effect depends not only on a timeline of when things happened, but also on how and why those actions are related.

“The Decline of Home-Cooking and the Weakening of the American Family”
Shaw’s essay is a research paper that evaluates the importance of home cooking and sharing a meal with our families. The essay explores the decline of home cooking and the causes and effects that are associated with this change, such as overworking and the influence of the media. The end result, unfortunately, is a decline of family values and the increase of various social and physical problems such as obesity.

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20 April 2011

The Decline of Home-Cooking and the Weakening of the American Family

How many of us can remember ourselves as kids playing on a breezy summer day from dawn to dusk, only to be called home by our mothers to eat a warm, home-cooked meal at the family table? No doubt many of us have memories like those. Home-cooked American staples such as Sunday afternoon pot roasts and home-fried chicken have long been commonplace among families in our society. However, could that be coming to an end? In recent years, home-cooking has seen a decline, and with it has come a weakening of the family. This problem does not exist simply as a decline in eating at home, but it is rather a loss of interest in the traditional and integral home-cooking that families have thrived on throughout the history of our nation.

Today, American men and women are working many hours a week at their jobs, sometimes even working multiple jobs. With this, they are also inevitably falling more and more into the fast-paced lifestyle that consumes modern America. Thus, certain things like eating a home-cooked meal are just not as high on the priority list as others.

This has led to a decline in traditional home-cooking, which has also caused a loss of interest in family values among urban American society. These families are not as strong or as connected as they used to be, and many are being torn apart because of a lack of unity and togetherness that had been fostered in the past by eating meals together at home.

Michael Pollan, a professor of journalism and an accomplished writer, states in his article “Out of the Kitchen, Onto the Couch” that Americans have been increasing the amount of time they spend at work and enjoying less time at home in recent years (44). Pollan states that “[s]ince 1967, we've added 167 hours – the equivalent of a month's full-time labor – to the total amount of time we spend at work each year, and in households where both parents work, the figure is more like 400 hours” (44). Pollan goes on to say that Americans spend more of their time working than people in any other industrialized country. This is not surprising, however, because in countries where cooking is still a common element in day-to-day life, they also have more time to devote to it (44).

Because of the alarming fact that Americans are so caught up in work, their family members, such as their children and young teenagers, are often left to fend for themselves once they get home from school or other day-time activities. This is not a good situation. Most young people would rather eat ice cream than a balanced snack, and yet, they are being left to determine their eating habits on their own.

Kei Nomaguchi says that “[s]ince the 1970s, the United States has undergone a variety of demographic, economic, and cultural changes” (15). Nomaguchi goes on to explain that these changes have resulted in U.S. adults integrating work and family differently than before, and this has subsequently changed the way they feel about it

(15). “One notable change,” Nomaguchi points out, “is the increasing sense of conflict between paid work and family life” (15). Nomaguchi suggests that “[l]onger paid work hours increases the possibility of a spillover of work demands onto family life” (18). This can be readily seen with the absence of parents who work all day only to bring their work home with them at the end of the day. Consequently, these parents have little time to spend with their families. This issue is causing great strain on family relationships and has had negative impacts on healthy family life.

The decline of home-cooking is not just because of Americans’ busy lifestyles, however. Michael Pollan, in “Out of the Kitchen, Onto the Couch,” makes the observation that cooking in America has become a “spectator sport” (35). This is made evident by the abundance of cooking-related television shows currently on air in the U.S. The abundance of cooking shows and the preference of people to watch others cook instead of actually doing it themselves presents a problem for our society. This problem is two-fold. First, as already stated, modern America has shifted from actually preparing home-cooked meals to simply watching others do it. Pollan summarizes this in saying, “[I]t has been easier for us to give up cooking than it has been to give up talking about it—and watching it” (28).

The second part of the problem is that for many Americans, media has become more important than sitting down to a nice, home-cooked meal. Instead, they opt for meals made to be eaten in front of the TV, which further fuels the problem. Rather than preparing a balanced, home-cooked meal to be enjoyed by the entire family, they slap mayonnaise between two slices of bread, add some cold-cuts to it with some chips on

the side, grab a soda, and go plop themselves down in front of the TV to engage in intellectually mindless entertainment for a solid hour.

This mass consumption of mainstream media on a daily basis has actually been linked to poor dietary choices in adolescents. In a recent study published in *Pediatrics for Parents*, Anna R. McAlister and T. Bellina Cornwell prove that children are heavily influenced by common brand names and logos, including those belonging to popular fast-food chains. According to the study, the authors found that “children use brand cues to determine what food products will be exciting” (McAlister and Cornwell 19). The study goes on to explain that “values associated with items (like food choices) are formed as young as three years old” (McAlister and Cornwell 19). In addition to this, the study proposes some simple ways for parents to help counteract this problem. First of all, they suggest that restricting the amount of TV your child watches can help limit the amount of advertising they are exposed to (McAlister and Cornwell 19). Other solutions could include talking to our children about advertising and encouraging them to be skeptical, explaining the reasons for the rules to our children instead of just enforcing them, allowing some freedom by giving them the opportunity to choose products for themselves from a pre-approved list, and removing the branding from certain items when necessary (McAlister and Cornwell 19).

Indeed, much of the responsibility for the decline of home-cooking can be attributed to Americans’ desire for media entertainment in contrast to other household family activities. However, many of the aversions that people have towards home-cooking also stem from their view of cooking. In the past, people cooked at home because they had to. Now, with the advent of all kinds of new technologies and

methods for “manufacturing” food, Americans are not required to perform the same time-consuming tasks that are involved with cooking. In “Change in Work-Family Conflict,” veteran food-marketing researcher Harry Balzer delivers an analogy that puts into perspective how the idea of cooking changes over time. Balzer says, “A hundred years ago, chicken for dinner meant going out and catching, killing, plucking, and gutting a chicken. Do you know anybody who still does that? It would be considered crazy . . . that's exactly how cooking will seem to your grandchildren: something people used to do when they had no other choice” (qtd. in Pollan 31).

Valerie Ramey, a professor of Economics at the University of California, San Diego, states that “time spent in home production decreased dramatically over the first two-thirds of the twentieth century” (1). This has carried over into present-day society. The amount of time that Americans spend in “home production” is lower than ever before. This “home production,” which is the term given to any activity that takes place within the home which serves to benefit the home or those within it, has long been a vital part of American society. It has only begun to decline over the last century due to the increased amount of time that Americans spend working outside the home. Ramey says that this home production, which she also refers to as “homemaking,” includes food preparation, cleaning the house, care of family members living in the household, shopping, and managing the household (7). The author notes that cooking, referred to as “food preparation,” was rated higher in 1985 than childcare, and things like laundry and cleaning were rated near the bottom (7). It is startling to see how America's priorities have changed since 1985. Research has already been established that adults are working more frequently, and sadly, cooking has fallen on the priorities list in America's mindset.

We are too busy to cook, and instead of prioritizing it over the other “homemaking” activities, we focus on getting things like cleaning and laundry done and settle for fast food or some other quick meal to fill our bellies.

Perhaps America's new generation is moving into a new era – an era where cooking is a thing of the past, and the need for it is gone. But could this be a problem for the health and well-being of our nation? Michael Pollan, in another article entitled “Our National Eating Disorder,” says, “In America, each generation has been free to reinvent its cuisine, very often more than once” (77). Pollan states that “the success of food marketers in exploiting shifting nutritional fashions has a cost,” and he goes on to say that “getting us to change how we eat over and over again tends to undermine the various social structures that surround (and steady) our eating habits” (77). These “social structures” include the family, which has suffered greatly at the hand of the prepared food market.

We must be wary of the effects that our eating habits are having on our bodies and our families. Richard Epstein, a professor of law at the University of Chicago, states that “[f]or much of recorded history, the central challenge facing ordinary people was getting enough food into their own bellies and those of their families” (1361). He goes on to state that “like all living things, human beings are machines that need to burn fuel to survive” (1361). Oftentimes, however, the food we eat is not healthy for us by any means, and it is certainly not the choice fuel we should be burning. It is these choices that we have made that have helped lead to our nation's severe health issues such as obesity. This issue is only one of many that plague our nation and is a direct result of the choices we make each and every day, including choices in our diet. According to Epstein, 25 to

40 percent of variation in an individual's weight is due to genetic factors, with the remaining 60 to 75 percent being affected by one's environment, which includes things like family stress and the consumption of fast foods (1365). This shows just how much our choices and our family life impact our health and the health of our children.

In an article entitled, “What Do Teenagers Eat?” Abbie MacFarlane argues that “developing healthy dietary practices in childhood and adolescence lays the groundwork for healthy eating choices later in life” (21). MacFarlane further argues that these healthy childhood eating habits provide a stronger foundation for good health throughout adulthood, and she goes on to explain that eating a healthy diet during adolescence will help ensure good health, body weight, and peak performance in school activity (21). According to MacFarlane, there are several key elements of an adolescent's diet that should not be overlooked. She says that “snacking is common among adolescents and, although linked with obesity, is an important dietary behavior during adolescence when energy and nutrient requirements are greatly increased” (22). In addition to this, MacFarlane explains that breakfast is regarded as the most important meal of the day, and yet it so often is overlooked by many adolescents (22). Parents would do well to encourage their children to sit down and have breakfast in the morning before leaving the home. This would allow time in the mornings for families to share experiences together and become better connected. MacFarlane further points out the following:

Family meals are associated with the types of food adolescents eat . . .

Teenagers who regularly sit down to meals with their family have healthier eating habits than those who don't, and a positive atmosphere at family

meals has been shown to steer adolescents, particularly girls, from eating disorders. (22)

From this we can see that mealtime within the home is important to maintaining not only a healthy life, but also a healthy family life as well.

It is important for parents to be responsible in overseeing the development of their children, including developing a healthy diet. Some people might argue, however, that dietary policies enforced by the government are the only viable means of maintaining a healthy life for our nation's youth. One such example of this is expressed in the article "Obesity -- The New Frontier of Public Health Law." In this article, it is argued that a "[p]ublic health law approach posits that the law can be used to create conditions that allow people to lead healthier lives" (Mello, Studdert, and Brennan). The article further argues that the government has the power to regulate private behavior due to its constitutional source of authority being its police power (Mello, Studdert, and Brennan). The problem with this thinking, however, is that governments should not force its own views and opinions onto the people it governs, no matter what the case. In this instance, the American people should be allowed to decide for themselves what element of a healthy diet best works for them. It should be left up to the parents, not the state, to determine what their child will eat.

The importance of maintaining a healthy diet and active family life cannot be stressed enough. Home-cooking can resolve so many of the health-based problems in America. Sadly, people overlook the value of home-cooking and choose to place their values elsewhere. As a traditional element of our society, however, it is an integral part of a healthy family life and should not be overlooked. Jean Duruz argues that "[w]hen

traditional meanings of 'home' seem most under threat, it is not unusual to resort to comfort foods as embodiments of 'homely' meanings" (57). She further argues that a connection exists between food, love, and the "sacred space" known as the kitchen (58). It can, no doubt, be agreed upon that many of our fondest memories are those of our family's kitchen, such as when we were little, and our greatest joy in life was to have the opportunity to "lick the paddles" after a fresh cake had just been baked. Memories like these should make us realize that we cannot take for granted the power of little things like helping our mother bake a batch of cookies or sitting around the family dinner table recounting the events of the day to one another. It is through memories shared that families are forever bound in love to one another.

Ultimately, it cannot be denied that the priorities of the American family have changed drastically in recent years and are continuing to do so. The "reinventing of our cuisine" comes with this change. The American population is redefining how they value cooking, and if something is not done, we will move into a new era where the art and appreciation of traditional home-cooking may be lost forever.

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Writing Claims of Fact

As active participants in our world community, we come into contact with the conditions of the world around us every day—through interacting with the people around us, watching the news on television, reading a newspaper, or even attending the performance of a drama. These experiences and the knowledge that we gain from them can often make us want to share our knowledge with others, a responsibility many of the world’s citizens take seriously. Oftentimes, that responsibility leads to a desire to write in order to share our own knowledge—and the knowledge of reliable authorities—with others in our world. This desire results in our writing claims of fact.

Writers of claims of fact seek to offer factual information about past, present, or future societal conditions that involve specific communities or interest groups. Many times, our purpose in writing claims of fact is to discuss our reasons for disagreeing with some widely held belief, or because we endeavor to inform our audience about a condition in our society with which the audience is unfamiliar. For instance, we may write a claim of fact to explain why we see a condition in our society as a problem for a minority group by illustrating how that group of people is negatively affected by the beliefs and actions of the majority. On the other hand, we may write a claim of fact to explain how a specific group benefits from a program that has recently been implemented by our community. Thus, a claim of fact does not have to focus only on the negative, but instead it focuses on simply offering information to an audience who does not have ready access to all the facts and, as a result, may be mistaken in their beliefs.

To strengthen our argument, we support claims of fact with factual information such as firsthand experiences, examples, statistics, and information from other reliable authorities whom the audience would be able to verify through their own research. Our argument is made sound by giving irrefutable evidence for the claims that we make, which are often inferences based on the factual evidence we have gathered. We typically can prove claims of fact without a doubt although there may at times be exceptions to the fact. The thesis statement should offer a comprehensive explanation of our attitude towards the issue on which the essay focuses. When writing a claim of fact, we should always write with a specific audience in mind, addressing those people or groups who would have a vested interest in the issue and how that issue is viewed by the community, or world, around them.

Quick Tips for Students:

1. Be sure to offer evidence that is sufficient for proving your point, information that is relevant to the issue at hand. Depending on how complex or controversial your claim is, you may need to offer more data if the claim is difficult to prove or less if your audience would be easily convinced.
2. Always question the reliability of your sources because some may be misleading in the way they present themselves. Look for other sources who use your authorities' information instead of assuming the source is reliable. Since not all sources are reliable, it is up to you as the writer and researcher to determine the credibility and authority of your sources.
3. Balance information gleaned from sources with your own statement of factual information. Avoid reliance on the sources to make your argument for you; instead, offer inferences based on your interpretation and understanding of the facts.

Writing Claims of Policy

Claims of policy make recommendations. These recommendations call for a specific solution to a specific problem. Because students must establish that a problem exists or will exist before making recommendations or discuss causes and effects of a problem first, this writing assignment may be assigned later in English 1020 since students will need to understand how to establish a claim of fact, cause, or value first.

Currently in the VSCC English Department, English 1020 instructors may have students focus on a single issue about which they feel passionate such as “creating a living working wage for workers,” “providing affordable health care for all Americans,” or “establishing a daycare center on VSCC’s college campus for students with childcare needs.” English instructors may ask students to build shorter argumentative essays—a claim of fact, a claim of value, a claim of cause—to establish a problem, and the student will end the course by writing a longer argumentative essay, a claim of policy that offers solutions to the problem. Some instructors may begin the course with an I-Search paper that allows students to explore their interests as they begin to shape their research for a claim of policy. However, other VSCC English 1020 teachers take an opposite approach, asking students to write shorter claims of fact, definition, value, cause, and policy covering a variety of topics—one topic for each claim type. All of these methods can yield strong claims of policy. In the following included claims of policy, we see differing cases.

Students can write successful claims of policy by clearly establishing a specific problem, discussing the problem’s causes or effects, offering an evaluation of the

problem, and providing a solution to the problem. As is the case in writing successful arguments, the claim of policy should also provide a clearly focused persuasive thesis that identifies the problem and solution, well-supported reasons backed by relevant and sufficient evidence, a counter-argument, and an appeal to an audience's pathos, logos, and ethos.

Quick Tips for Students:

1. Note that policy claims are recognizable because they tend to use the words “should” and “should not,” but students need to also recognize when the words are implied. For example, “Support Our Troops” is a declarative bumper sticker that is a policy claim because the understood larger statement is, “We should support our troops.”
2. Writers of policy claims often have problems coming up with specific solutions for the problem, and many times, it is because those writers have failed to narrow their audience to a specific group of people. Consider your options when it comes to audience; in other words, determine who will be responsible for carrying out the actions you propose in your solution and what level of responsibility you are assigning to each group of people in that audience.
3. Don't forget to familiarize yourself with as many options as possible before suggesting a plan of action. Also consider research on solutions that have been implemented and how and why they have been unsuccessful in other places. This knowledge will help you improve your counterargument.

“The Cost of Corpulence” – Prize Winner

“The Cost of Corpulence” is a research claim of policy calling for a change in diet and exercise for the U.S. military and for the children who someday will be our military strength. The research essay is organized in three stages. In the first stage, the writer makes a claim of fact that the problem of obesity in the military exists. The second stage involves examining possible causes for the problem (claim of cause) and the third stage, which concludes the essay, offers suggestions for solutions to the problem (claim of policy). The writer draws on government publications, military publications, e-books on both childhood and military health and nutrition, and several online news sources. Note the skillful use of signal phrases to introduce quotations and the smooth integration of quotations in sentences. The research component is strong, but the military background of this returning student brings a perspective based on personal experience that enriches the appeal of his argument.

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ENGL 1020-004

5 May 2011

The Cost of Corpulence

When one thinks about the vow every service member of the United States military takes, to defend the nation against all enemies foreign and domestic, one may not think of obesity as a domestic enemy, but it is a growing problem that is hindering the mission of our Armed Forces. While it may have gone unnoticed by most, the increase in percentage of Americans who are unfit to serve in the military is harming recruiting efforts. This certainly does not go unnoticed by recruiters or other high ranking military officials, especially when obesity is the only issue preventing the individual from serving. Not only is the military being attacked on the recruiting front, it is also being attacked from within. Losing an active duty service member reduces the man power of the military and is also highly expensive. It costs thousands, sometimes hundreds of

thousands of dollars to train specific members in specific fields, and it is a grievous waste to lose said members to corpulence. Obesity is not only detrimental to the strength of the military; it is dangerous. The defenders of our country need to be in excellent fighting condition in order to answer the call, should our nation find itself in duress. Obesity weakens selection, drains vital funding, and, in extreme cases, leads to the loss of life; there is no room for obesity in the United States military.

A nation cannot construct and maintain a strong military force if its resources are eroding. Obesity in America is preventing many potential service members from enlisting. In many cases, this is the only factor that is preventing the enlistment of intelligent, patriotic Americans who could otherwise be model soldiers. In an article entitled “Retired Military Leaders Worry Recruit Population Is ‘Too Fat to Fight,’” Alexandra Hemmerly-Brown states, “A study initiated by more than 100 retired generals and admirals claims that being overweight or obese is the leading medical reason why potential recruits fail to qualify for military service.” It is essential to maintain an adequate level of professional service men and women at all times. If these problems in America do not decline, this will eventually lead to a severe shortage in either the number or quality of recruits enlisting. The military is not ignorant of this fact. There are studies being conducted by former military members that indicate that these problems are legitimate and call for congressional measures to improve the quality of food being served in schools (Hemmerly-Brown).

The training of a fledgling military recruit involves the use of immensely expensive equipment, land, schooling, special training techniques, government-contracted professionals and staff, and countless other high-priced expenses, not to mention the

untold amount of time invested. It is significantly more economical to retain a service member who has already been trained than it is to train a new recruit. Even though it can be costly, members are not permitted to fall out of the specifications of the military regarding weight, and it is possible for a fully trained serviceman or servicewoman to be discharged due to discrepancies. According to the Committee on Body Composition, Nutrition, and Health of Military Women, “military personnel, regardless of their individual occupational specialty, incur increasingly punitive administrative consequences for failing to ‘make weight’” (Committee 87). While the threat of punitive action is often motivation enough to maintain a proper body fat composition, some service members still struggle to stay within regulations. The cost of losing a fully trained soldier is so great that the Department of Defense regulates specified programs to control weight loss in every branch of the military, using scientific, medical and personal techniques to burn off more energy than the soldier is taking in until adequate weight loss is accomplished (Committee 88). If threats, training, and personalized programs fail to keep a service member in a proper range of body composition, then the military has no choice but to discharge, and therefore lose, a very valuable asset.

Quite possibly, the most important reason for soldiers to stay in shape is the fact that it may save not only their own lives, but it may also save the lives of fellow soldiers. The Subcommittee on Military Weight Management and the Committee on Military Nutrition Research states, “The military currently expects and demands a commitment to physical fitness that far surpasses that which is customary in the civilian population” (Subcommittee 126), and for good reason. Members not only have to be able to move freely and athletically as individuals, but they can find themselves in situations where

they must do so with over fifty pounds of gear on them, or even worse, carrying a fellow service member. Overall, excessive body fat is detrimental to the physical condition of a soldier, as fit soldiers with less adipose tissue and more muscle are able to carry their equipment more efficiently, carry out physical duties more dexterously, and are less prone to injuries (Subcommittee 183). An increase in obesity in active duty military members could prove to have fatal consequences.

The strength and independence of our nation is dependent largely on a strong, healthy military. The government recognizes this fact, and while attempts are being made to ensure that our active duty members as well as our future members are staying in good shape, the numbers keep rising. What is the cause for this increase in the military's waistline? Research shows that Americans in general are becoming heavier. In 1980, only approximately one third of Americans were considered overweight and about one tenth were considered obese, while in the past twenty five years the numbers have shot up to over 60 percent being overweight, and one in four Americans are considered obese (Oliver 1). The number of overweight children has doubled since 1980, and this has led some professionals to believe that this could be the first generation in modern America that will live shorter lives than their parents (Oliver 1). There are two main causes of excessive weight gain that almost all professionals agree on: caloric intake, and energy (caloric) expenditure. Americans are eating worse and moving less than they ever have in the past. In children, obesity results from a higher influx of calories than is needed for normal growth, development, metabolism, and the physical movement of the child (United). These principles hold as true to members of the military as they do to young children growing up in America.

Before they are even of consenting age to join the military, children are fighting a battle on the home-front against high-sugar/fatty foods and lethargic lifestyles. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention states that “large portion sizes for food and beverages, eating meals away from home, frequent snacking on energy-dense foods and consuming beverages with added sugar are often hypothesized as contributing to excess energy intake of children and teens” (United). Studies have shown that higher caloric diets may not impact an individual’s physique as long as the individual is staying active enough to burn off the excess calories. We as a country are just not as active as we have been in the past. Advances in technology, among other things, have led us to more leisurely lives as we invent more and more creative ways to not move for ourselves. In his book *Fat Politics: the Real Story behind America’s Obesity Epidemic*, Eric Oliver states, “Obesity was not prominent in nineteenth-century America because most Americans lived like the Amish do today; they engaged in steady, manual labor and burned hundreds of calories through the course of their physically active day” (143). In many cases, potential members of the military have an entire lifestyle that needs to permanently change in order for them to stay in acceptable shape.

If it is true that exercise can burn off excess calories and keep an individual fit, and the military is known for its grueling physical training sessions and harsh lifestyles, then how is it possible for a military member to be obese? A significant reason for this occurrence has developed into a highly controversial debate point among military members and the public: incentive physical training (or incentive PT). The controversy surrounding Incentive PT has gained the attention of the media, the parents of military members, and active duty members, myself included. Incentive PT is a policy that has

existed since the formation of the U.S. Military that involves punishing an individual for an infraction by means of physical exercise in lieu of formal punishment, once a service member is no longer in boot camp (Mitchell). As opposed to popular belief, the phrase “drop and give me twenty” can now get a service member in a lot of trouble. Incentive PT is no longer tolerated outside of boot camp, a notion that has developed over the past ten years. Marine Corps Sergeant Major Carlton Kent was quoted in an article in *The Marine Times*, saying, “I don’t see incentive PT done that much outside of boot camp, and if they do it and they are caught, they will be held accountable for its reactions” (qtd. in Mitchell). Due to a high influx of protests from parents of servicemen, and legal cases regarding hazing in the military, the stance has shifted from immediate physical punishment to paperwork and write-ups for poor behavior. This simply means that when a junior soldier makes a mistake, instead of making the soldier do pushups, crunches or sprints, his squad leader or team leader has to decide whether correcting him in that manner is worth potentially losing his own rank. Before these policies were in place, the use of incentive PT was an everyday occurrence. It was commonplace for me to see a Marine on a sidewalk doing pushups in Camp Lejeune for forgetting to salute an officer or for disrespecting a non-commissioned officer. Removing these practices took a large portion of many servicemen’s physical training away and left senior military members with one less tool with which to keep their men and women well-disciplined and in shape.

The problems with weight in the military are existent and numerous, but they are not irreversible. If the problems could be halted at a young age in America’s youth, the results would trickle down into the branches of our military, and the outcome would be

a healthier, better equipped fighting force, consequently, due to a more fit recruiting pool. Another viable option is to reinvent the way the military is training. If certain groups of soldiers are having problems maintaining proper weight, then the way they eat and exercise should be evaluated and revised to suit the needs of the individual and, thus, the military. Through the method of trial and error, acceptable policies can be discovered and enforced to ensure that, in the future, our military stays fit, trim and ready to fight.

The first step in fixing the problem with obesity should be to define the word itself. If a soldier is over the specified body fat percentage and over the weight requirement, but is able to complete an exemplary physical fitness test, is he or she unfit to serve? When it comes to a questionable scenario regarding the physical composition of a service member, common sense should be allowed to dictate whether the individual is in shape or not. Currently, the “quick fix” method of determining if a soldier is improperly overweight is a taping method. The individual is measured around the neck and the waist and the result determines whether or not the individual is overweight because of excessive fat or excessive muscle. The main reason this method is used is because of its affordability and the fact that it is quick and easy, which is highly beneficial when you have hundreds of soldiers to measure in a limited timeframe. Although it may be quick, easy and inexpensive, this technique is not a proper, one-size-fits-all, scientific method, and the cost of losing a good service member is much higher than an updated, more logical method such as leaving the decision up to the chain of command’s discretion. The textbook body composition for a male Marine, age 17-26, who stands 70 inches tall, is between 132 to 192 pounds and no more than 18 percent body fat

(Powers). I am 70 inches tall, and at my heaviest while on active duty in the Marine Corps, I was 195 pounds. I also lifted weights six days a week, had very low body fat and ran a first-class physical fitness test. There are hundreds of soldiers in the same position who may be overweight due to muscle gain, and the taping method isn't a very good indicator of overall body fat percentage in weight lifters. It should be at the discretion of the chain of command whether or not to take action when it comes to height and weight standards, and physical performance should be the determining factor.

The military essentially has two time spans to work with to defeat obesity: before enlistment and during enlistment. It is obviously more desirable to avoid the problem altogether rather than fix it once it has already occurred, so ensuring that our younger generations of civilians are healthy should be a priority to the military. While the military does not have a direct say in the activity levels of children in America, it does have a substantial voice and influence. Any programs that encourage physical activity in children and young adults would be beneficial, and in some cases, should be mandatory (such as in schools as physical education). Robert Johnson of *The Columbia Tribune* states, "Many people who might belittle nutrition or walking and bicycling programs for children will take them seriously if the military is promoting them and calling it a national security concern." If we can beat the problem as a country before the individuals join, then no further action would be needed outside of maintaining good health in the military.

While the military cannot directly control the behavior of the civilian population, it can control the behavior of service members. There are many policies that could be enforced to maintain the fitness level needed to conduct combat arms. For instance, it is

hard to control what soldiers are going to consume on their own personal downtime, but it is easy to control the level of soldiers' activities. If the military were to take away the fear of using incentive PT methods, this would enable an entire new level of training. I believe there is room for incentive PT in the military as long as it is done in a non-demeaning, productive way. The military is developing a trend of adopting policies based on rare occasions, and scattered upset civilian sectors. Some of these policies are damaging to the overall mission of the military, such as reducing training activities in extreme weather, outlawing incentive PT, and further tying the hands of non-commissioned officers, who are well known to be the base of leadership in the military. These restrictions did not come out of nowhere, and in some cases, servicemen have been killed as a result of over-training or training in harsh conditions. The rules that are being followed now are in place to ensure the military is not losing life unnecessarily and to ensure every soldier is working in an environment free of belittlement and harassment. These policies are working, and they do what they are intended to do, but at what cost? Wars are fought in harsh climates, and often the enemy is acclimated and dangerous. Soldiers need to be prepared to fight in such conditions, and while there are occasions where wrong-doing (such as hazing or over-training) has led to harm or undue humiliation, these cases are generally the exceptions, not common practice, and should be treated as such. Nothing should inhibit the overall goal and mission of having a sharp, well-trained and fit fighting force, especially not generally uninformed civilian opinion. Furthermore, the programs that are in place in the military to help overweight members, such as the Marine Corps body composition program, are looked at as signs of weakness and, therefore, are avoided by many overweight members for fear of losing out on

promotion opportunities (Salahi). If these programs are ever to be successful, this needs to stop. It is illogical for higher-ups in the chain of command to encourage soldiers to utilize fat reduction programs, and then penalize them because they are in said programs.

The health of the United States seems to have declined over the past twenty years, and processed high-calorie foods and lack of exercise are largely to blame. With a standard definition of what is an acceptable level of fitness, and programs set in place to enforce these standards, the problems can be quelled. The military is the first and last line of defense in our country. If the problems are not properly addressed, the United States could feel the consequences of these mistakes in a costly manner that could have been avoided.

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“Earning Equality... Or at Least Appearing to Do So” – **Prize Winner**

Writing about controversial issues, such as gay rights, is difficult for student writers who are learning to write objectively and with a credible, intelligent voice. This claim of policy essay written on such a controversial issue takes a stand that is supported with ample, credible evidence, which is incorporated smoothly into the essay’s text. The writer clearly outlines his central claims in his thesis, and then the body of the essay follows the organization suggested there when developing those claims. It is well-documented and researched, yet the writer’s voice remains strong and interesting. Note as well the skillful blending of logos, ethos, and pathos.

Jonathan George

Prof. Kay Grossberg

English 1020-009

9 November 2010

Earning Equality... Or at Least Appearing to Do So

Discrimination in the United States can be dated back to the very day President Thomas Jefferson wrote and signed the Declaration of Independence, and although there has been some progress in eliminating certain kinds of prejudice, it has only escalated since then. “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal,” Jefferson wrote, and this famous line may be as straightforward as it gets, but the promise within it continues to be broken even to this day. Like the denial of women’s rights in the early 1900’s and the Negro segregation that continued through the 1970’s, the gay community has had its fair share of discrimination, too. Homosexual men and women in America have faced a tough battle with prejudices in many aspects of their lives--in schools, workplaces, and the military—varying from religious, emotional, and ethical reasons, especially when it comes to being denied allowances into the military, into matrimony, and into starting a family of their own. Although the gay community

has had some success in obtaining equality in these previously stated aspects, the rather small amount of triumph is greatly overshadowed by the continuing struggle for many gay and lesbian members of society in obtaining equality in America. As a whole, the United States would only reap the rewards if homosexuals were allowed to serve in the military, marry, and adopt, which would only further strengthen America's freedom fighters, increase the revenues in the marriage market, and benefit many foster homes that have had difficulty in finding permanent residences for their foster children.

Through countless reports and studies, homosexuality, or sexuality in general, is being deemed as an aspect of life that is never actually decided upon. In fact, it is quite possible that sexual orientation is decided while a child is still in the womb. Dean Hamer, an American researcher, developed a study that introduced a certain X-chromosome in men that is obtained from their mothers as holding an answer to this question ("Am I Gay?"). In fact, prior to 1977, homosexuality was actually seen as a mental illness, coupled with disorders like depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, and even schizophrenia. According to Avert.org, a website that targets the prevention of and education about HIV and AIDS, "homosexuality is not a mental disorder and the APA (the American Psychological Association) opposes all portrayals of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people as mentally ill and in need of treatment due to their sexual orientation" (qtd in "Am I Gay?"). These just further justify the assertion that actions against gay and lesbian members of America are purely discriminatory in nature.

Even with the large amount of downfalls, perhaps the most recent triumph comes from the overturn of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT) policy, a bill banning the presence of homosexuals openly serving in the military. Both sides, though—the

opponents and supporters of this policy—are in disagreement with its terms. For those who support the bill, the policy does not make a tremendous effort in disallowing the enlistment of gays and lesbians because without having the opportunity to “ask,” then the enlisted soldiers will not have the opportunity to “tell.” Opponents of the bill, however, consider it as being completely discriminatory in nature to a certain social group and, therefore, see the need for its overturn (Katel). This bill, presented by Bill Clinton during his presidency, is what led to the release of many faithful, honest, and hard-working homosexual members of the United States’ military.

Before the decision of Judge Virginia Phillips, about 12,800 gay and lesbian members of the military had been discharged (Katel). One of these members is Lt. Daniel Choi who, after his release, instantly became a well-known face of the modern gay rights movement. In a television broadcast in Washington D.C. by *Fox 5 News*, Anchor Brian Bolter conducted an interview between Choi and Bishop Harry Jackson, a strong supporter of DADT and head of the High Impact Leadership Coalition, an organization that strives to shape America into obtaining better Christian morals and mannerisms.

In his opening statement, Jackson states that introducing open gay and lesbian members into the military will endanger unit cohesion, increase sexual tension, and hinder military readiness, which, as Bolter responds, sounds exactly like the excuse as to why women were disallowed enlistment into the military. Jackson further states that the military needs to act “like a football team, regardless of gender, sex, any of those things, [to] make sure that America’s safe,” putting only the most qualified (and, consequently, heterosexual) men and women into combat. “I think what we have is that liberal Democrats are trying to score points with a radical gay movement before the mid-term

election,” Jackson adds. “It needs to be studied, it needs to be weighed out, and I want my country and all people in it to be safe.”

Choi counters with his own argument, saying that truthfulness about every aspect of an individual’s life only strengthens unit cohesion:

I think when we fire people simply for their integrity, for their act of telling the truth about who they are, there is nobody who can say that any team, any organization, is strengthened. When I put on this uniform, when I wear these clothes in combat in Iraq just like the thousands who are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan right now, I didn’t swear just to serve a certain kind of people. I didn’t swear to protect only a certain kind of religious liberties. I swore to protect everyone.

It is this kind of integrity and leadership, Choi argues, that is demonstrated not only by the straight members of the military but also by the ones who have recently been discharged solely because they happened to be gay or lesbian.

On October 12, 2010, Judge Virginia Phillips ruled DADT unconstitutional “because it infringes on gay service members’ free-speech and privacy rights while actually undermining the stated goal of enhancing military readiness,” thus barring military recruiters from denying any openly gay or lesbian soldiers solely because of their sexual orientation (qtd in Katel). Since its overturn, many discharged gay and lesbian members have decided to re-enlist. Even with this overturn, however, this does not stop the constant hatred and mockery demonstrated within closed quarters. One example is of a renowned gay activist who has become rather infamous to the gay community because of her websites and homosexual help-lines on the Internet. Lesbian soldier AJ Stacy

recounts her firsthand experience of mockery and criticism when she decided to re-enlist after the overturn of DADT. Sitting in a secluded office, viewing piles of paperwork with her recruiting officer, Stacy overhears other officers making a mockery of gay and lesbian members of society. In response to these officers audibly bashing and using inappropriate language against their fellow soldiers, Stacy says, “I am completely disillusioned by the incredible level of unprofessionalism that I witnessed [that day]... the very week ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ was repealed” (qtd in “Lesbian Walks”). The overturn of DADT may have been a triumphant victory for the gay community, but discrimination obviously still remains behind closed doors.

As if this fight for the opportunity to be a part of America’s brave and honorable military is not enough, gay and lesbian members of society are facing an intense battle for the right to marry. As of today, ten states—California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Oregon, Vermont, Washington, and the District of Columbia—recognize “same-sex unions,” which basically have the same advantages of the traditional marriage, with only California and Massachusetts recognizing actual same-sex marriages (Jost). The most recent victory in this sense was made in California on May 15, 2008, when Proposition 8, a bill defining marriage in California as between one man and one woman, was denied being admitted into law. In a jaw-dropping and nail-biting 4-3 decision, gay and lesbian Californians were permitted to tie the knot. Judge Vaughn R. Walker, chief judge of the U.S. District Court in San Francisco, said that Proposition 8 “violated the federal Equal Protection Clause because it infringed on same-sex couples' fundamental rights for no legitimate

government purpose” (qtd in Jost). This overturn, opponents fear, could now open up the possibility of allowing gay marriages across the country.

With the passing of this bill, some 5,000 same-sex couples were married within the first week—11,000 same-sex marriages total since the enactment--including celebrities such as Ellen DeGeneres and ex-Star Trek actor George Takei (Jost). Among these marriages is one of a life-long couple, Jennifer Pizer and Doreena Wong. As Pizer, a lawyer for the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, finished her speech in front of thousands of spectators in San Francisco after Proposition 8’s overturn, she looked out into the audience and beckoned to her partner. “Now,” Pizer said, “I’d like to ask a question I’ve waited 24 years to ask: Doreena Wong, will you marry me?” and when Wong said yes, the crowd went into an uproar of cheers, whistles, and congratulations (qtd. in Jost). Deny members of society something as desirable as marriage, and the opportunity becomes that much more sacred.

Opponents, however, are worried that the passing of this bill will create a “slippery slope effect,” fearing that other states will allow gay marriage only to follow the trend. Through countless instances, the opposition refers to the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), a federal law defining marriage as a union between one man and one woman. In its repeal by those who are in favor of gay marriage, however the ultimate decision of allowing gay marriage is left to the individual state governments. Peter Sprigg, vice president of the Family Research Council and author of *Outrage: How Gay Activists and Liberal Judges Are Trashing Democracy to Redefine Marriage*, says that everyone, even the supporters of gay marriage, “should acknowledge that such a radical redefinition of our most fundamental social institution should not be imposed by the

federal government in the face of a strong consensus among the states against it” (qtd in Jost). Thus, DOMA should be left as is and the fight for gay marriage should be put to an abrupt end, according to Sprigg.

David Frum, another opponent of gay marriage and commentator for the *Morning Edition* in Washington, D.C., compares gay marriage to charity, saying that people only engage in charities when something is given to them in return—for example, a tax credit or another form of financial compensation. Frum presents a scenario where giving money to charitable organizations would reap the same benefits for a person as saving his or her money—instead of putting it towards a good cause. In this disparagement of charity, Frum argues, the act of charity becomes less desirable, the same way gay marriage will disparage the traditional marriage, making the opportunity to wed seem to lose its immense popularity. “If we understood marriage as well as our grandparents did,” he says, “we would realize that the demand for gay marriage isn't a demand to extend marriage. It's a demand to abolish it” (Frum). In other words, the “sanctity of marriage” will disappear if gay and lesbian couples are given the right to marry. If Frum and Sprigg had done their research, however, they would find many instances where allowing gay marriage has little, if any, negative effects on a country.

The most concrete reason, though, for disallowing a right to marriage for homosexuals is because of their inability to procreate. Contrary to popular belief, same-sex couples are just as willing and ready to start a family as opposite-sex couples in the United States. However, many states are challenging whether or not same-sex couples should be allowed to start their own family. There are a couple of ways that this can happen--artificial insemination and adoption. Both of these methods, though, are

debated by the opposition, using fundamentally sound heterosexual couples as the model example of how a child should be raised. Kathy Belge, a writer for About.com, argues that any effort to expand a family, whether in a heterosexual or homosexual household, can only be seen as being positive.

Today, only four states--Vermont, New Jersey, Massachusetts and California--allow gay and lesbian couples to adopt children legally (Belge 1). Inhabitants of Florida, the only state that has a specific law against adoption by same-sex couples, were misled by Anita Bryant, Belge writes, a woman who convinced the state that homosexuals were child molesters. Although the law has been challenged over the years many times, it shows no sign of being overturned. Belge examines the following:

The United States has many children waiting to be adopted. Older children and those with special needs are especially hard to place. Children who fit this category are in foster homes right now with gay and lesbian parents who want to adopt them. It is unfair to the children to deny them permanent secure homes... The law only hurts children waiting to be adopted and deprives loving parents who would care for these children.

Opponents also argue that children are best raised in a household with one male and one female doing the parenting, specifically if they are married and stable, but according to the 2000 census, only 24% of homes consisted of a married mother and father (Belge 1). This “one man, one woman” household may be ideal, but the odds of that happening in every household are statistically unlikely.

Another way that homosexual members of society can start a family is through artificial insemination, which is especially key for gay men and women who want the

child to be their own. For a gay woman, the process is easy; for a gay man, however, the process is much more difficult. For starters, a surrogate is very costly, averaging about \$50,000, and secondly, only the birth parent in surrogacy is considered as being a legal guardian, which could present problems down the road, specifically for men (Belge 2). Even so, the advancement of technology makes it much more possible for same-sex couples to become parents, so why should they be denied the ability to procreate when their supposed inability to do so is one of the reasons why same-sex marriages are being fought so toughly?

It should be obvious that declining rights to homosexuals--whether it be through the military, marriage, or starting a family--is done so only for discriminatory and unfair reasons. The military worries about unit cohesion, which is instead weakened when discrimination is put into the mix; the opponents of gay marriage struggle to protect the "sanctity of marriage"; and the adversaries of gay adoption worry about the children's well-being in a homosexual household. The fight for admittance into the military for gay and lesbian soldiers seems to have been put to a fortunate end, but the fight to marry and adopt remains a constant battle for the gay community. If America is really worried about keeping marriage's sacredness and maintaining the fact that children are better raised in a "one man, one woman" household, there are plenty of other methods that would be more effective than taking discriminatory actions against same-sex couples. Americans should instead look at marriage's ultimate opponent—the increasing divorce rate—and they should also look at the revenues and positive aspects that allowing gay marriages and adoptions can bring, especially in these recessionary times in the economy.

For starters, in straying from the belief that discrimination against gay and lesbian Americans is unfair and wrong, the ban on gay marriage has other disadvantages, which could be alleviated if the United States were to allow gay and lesbian members of society to marry. The marriage revenues are certainly not struggling, but introducing gay marriage into the American vocabulary could create a substantial profit for the United States' economy. In a study done by M. V. Lee Badgett, a research director at the University of California at Los Angeles's Williams Institute, gay marriages could introduce \$490 million in total spending for these marriages along with a \$3.2 million tax revenue in one year in the state of California alone, with other revenues such as hotel rooms and other services at \$37.2 million with a \$2.6 million tax revenue. With California's budget crisis nearing \$20 billion, this could definitely have some effect on this deficit (Tuna). Badgett examines that "revenues from gay marriages 'might not solve the entire budget crisis, but for given agencies or universities or school systems, the amount of money we're talking about is quite meaningful'" (qtd. in Tuna). Not only will it help the budget deficit in California, but it could also open up new spending and expansion throughout the United States, which could spark a positive turn towards leading Americans out of the recession.

Secondly, the claim that the "sanctity of marriage" will be destroyed if gay and lesbian couples are allowed to marry can easily be challenged with the statistics of other countries that recognize gay marriage already. According to William N. Eskridge, Jr., and John A. Gatver, two professors of jurisprudence at Yale University, many countries show that gay marriage does not, in fact, abolish the pleasure and existence of marriage in a country. In 1989, Denmark began allowing gay marriage, and ten years later, the

heterosexual marriage rate increased by 10.7 percent; Norway followed in 1993, and with a decade's passing, the heterosexual marriage rate had increased by 12.7 percent; and in 1995, Sweden began allowing gay marriage with a ten-year increase in the heterosexual marriage rate of 28.7 percent (Brown). Perhaps the biggest threat to this "sanctity of marriage," though, is the divorce rate, which is the highest in the United States by a substantial margin when compared to other countries, with an astonishing 54.8 percent (Brown). In Eskridge's and Gatver's study, over the ten years described, Denmark's divorce rate dropped by 13.9 percent, with Norway's dropping by 6.0 percent and Sweden's falling by 13.7 percent (Brown). Instead of the belief that allowing homosexual marriage will downgrade marriage's overall desirability, it is shown that the opposite is indeed true.

Finally, many adoption agencies are being forced to deny gay couples the ability to adopt children who have been taken into foster care, which is most prevalent in the state of Florida. Evan B. Donaldson Institute estimates that there are 134,000 foster-care children who remain to seek the desire of finding a true home in the United States, with thirty to forty percent of these children having some form of physical disability and around sixty percent suffering from some kind of psychological disorder (Hunt). "We're not talking about kids where there's a long line around the block to adopt," notes Adam Pertman, author of *Adoption Nation: How the Adoption Revolution is Transforming America*. "Many of these are the hardest kids to get anybody to take. How anyone justifies putting a child in the ninth foster home in seven years rather than be adopted by someone who wants them is beyond me" (qtd in Hunt). Because these children are the hardest to find homes for, denying gay and lesbian couples adoption rights for these

seemingly hard-to-adopt children is really only directly hurting the foster homes and foster children themselves.

In conclusion, whether it comes to denying rights for homosexuals from enlisting into the military, getting married, or adopting children, it is done solely for discriminatory reasons. By allowing the enlistment of thousands of gay and lesbian soldiers, a struggling military can instantly be strengthened; by allowing gay couples to marry, the economic boost could spark enough spending to help lift the United States out of its recession; and by giving gay men and women the opportunity to adopt, many foster children could be given homes, even if the home does not fit what is ideal when it comes to the typical household. The solutions for equality for the gay community are quite straightforward, but the discrimination may never be completely abolished. Women are still being treated unfairly in the workforce when compared to their male co-workers, while the black community is still finding its fair share of prejudice solely because of the color of their skin. The gay community is certainly no exception. Perhaps the discrimination cannot be stopped, but in gaining equality in these aspects, gay and lesbian Americans can at least be seen as equals to their fellow heterosexual citizens.

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