

## **Expository Essay:**

### **Exploring Thematic Motifs in The House on Mango Street**

**Grade 9**

**Unit Length: 2 weeks**

#### **Overview of unit:**

The stylistic and thematic richness of Sandra Cisneros' The House on Mango Street provides many opportunities to strengthen student writing and inquiry. As an on-going part of our study of the text, students keep vignette logs—in-depth studies of individual vignettes—in which they summarize, identify thematic motifs, and explore connections between vignettes. **In the course of writing these vignette logs, students explore the following motifs: Freedom/Entrapment, Growth, Maturity, Identity, Gender Roles, Racism, House/Home/Neighborhood/Community, and Poverty.** The majority of my work with this text has always focused on literary analysis—particularly work with the author's style and incorporating more stylistic devices into student's own writing—but I have been wanting for some time now to delve deeper into the thematic elements; the following expository essay assignment is my attempt to do so as students choose one of the thematic motifs (or slight variations) to explore in greater depth.

#### **Essential question(s):**

Through our study of the text, we explore how the following questions apply to both the character of Esperanza as well as our experience; students will link these questions to their expository essay as well.

- ✓ **Where does our sense of identity come from?**
- ✓ **How does environment shape our identity?**
- ✓ **What identities, if any, are permanent and which do we have the power to change?**
- ✓ **What roles do neighborhood and community play in shaping who we become?**

#### **STANDARDS:**

##### WRITING STRATEGIES

- 1.1 Establish a coherent thesis that conveys a clear and distinctive perspective; maintain consistent tone and focus.
- 1.4 Develop main ideas within the body of the composition through supporting evidence
- 1.5 Synthesize information from multiple sources  
Integrate quotations and citations

#### **UNIT OR LESSON PLAN CONTENT:**

Note: I began this unit after the students were familiar with the text, The House on Mango Street and with the vignette log process. The “days” listed below need not be consecutive, though allowing too much time between makes them lose focus! ☺

**DAY 1:** Students complete the Serial Write process. I gave them several minutes to look over the various motifs and select one of interest to them. I then gave them 8 minutes to write, keeping their pens moving on the page for the full time. Students then traded papers with a partner. Partners read the writing and then have 5 minutes to respond. The partner's job was to build upon or ask questions about the first student's writing,

NOT evaluate/correct or critique. Students then return papers to the original authors and the process repeats with a second motif.

**DAY 2:** Students complete Data Sheets for one of the motifs they wrote on the previous day; they will need computer access to do this.

**DAY 3:** Students complete the Writing a Thesis Statement worksheet.

**DAY 4:** Review with students how to write an effective introduction using the outline and notes; students write opening paragraphs.

**DAYS 5-6:** Students complete notes on writing a body paragraph/citing sources. Review professional model. Students use data sheets, the novel, etc. to complete the body paragraphs one at a time.

**DAY 7:** Students write concluding paragraph.

**DAYS 8-9:** Students type their essays. I gave them the Works Cited Key handout to use for crafting the Works Cited page. (As time allows, the unit can be extended to include the Works Cited Practice activity as well)

**DAY 10:** Students use the holistic scoring rubric to evaluate one another's papers and make suggestions. (I will have a form for this eventually).

**DAY 11:** Students prepare to present their papers

**DAY 12:** Presentations

**EVALUATION:** Student work will be scored on a 4-point holistic rubric. Prior to final, teacher-assessment, students participate in peer and self-response activities.

**STUDENT WORK:** (it's coming...)

**TEACHER COMMENTARY AND REFLECTION:**

I stretched the unit out over many more days than outlined here and consequently lost a lot of momentum. I will adhere to a tighter timeline—like the one above—in the future. All the handouts/templates are intended as support for struggling students; more advanced students might just need to see the directions and a model and they will be set to write.

**ENGLISH 1**  
**The House on Mango Street**  
**EXPOSITORY ESSAY — PACKET AND POINTS**

Assignment Title	Points Possible	Points Earned
<b>SERIAL WRITE</b>	12	
<i>PACKET</i>		
<b>WRITING A THESIS STATEMENT</b>	4	
<i>HANDOUT</i>		
<b>DATA SHEETS</b>	14	
<i>2-SIDED HANDOUT</i>		
		_____/30
<b>INTRODUCTION PARAGRAPH</b>	5	
<i>(BODY PARAGRAPHS CAN BE COMPLETED IN ANY ORDER!)</i>		
<b>BODY PARAGRAPH #1 (COMPARE/CONTRAST/SIMILE)</b>	5	
<b>BODY PARAGRAPH #2 (PERSONAL EXPERIENCE)</b>	5	
<b>BODY PARAGRAPH #3 (QUOTATION AND/OR INTERVIEW)</b>	5	
<b>BODY PARAGRAPH #4 (MANGO STREET EXAMPLE)</b>	5	
<b>BODY PARAGRAPH #5 (EXTRA CREDIT: CURRENT EVENT)</b>	–	
<b>CONCLUSION (CONNECTION TO ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS)</b>	5	
<b>SELF/PEER EVALUATION</b>	10	
		_____/35
<b>CITING SOURCES CLASS NOTES</b>	2	
<b>DRAFT WORKS CITED PAGE</b>	8	
<i>PRINTED LISTING OF YOUR SOURCES</i>		
<b>DRAFT OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION</b>	10	
<i>WORKSHEET W/STAMP</i>		
		_____/20
	<b>Earned</b>	_____/85

## ENGLISH 1

### The House on Mango Street

#### EXPOSITORY ESSAY—PACKET AND POINTS

**def-i-ni-tion** (def' e-nish' en) n. 1. The act of defining a word, phrase, or term. 2. The act of making clear and distinct. 3. A determining of outline, extent, or limits.

**ex·plain** [ik-spleyn] v. 1. To make plain or comprehensible. 2. To define; expound: We explained our plan to the committee.

**WRITING SITUATION:** When we define something, we make it our own. At the same time, though the act of defining we also make our own unique perceptions and understandings clear to others. Some terms have definite, concrete meanings, such as glass, book, or tree. Other terms such as honesty, honor, or love are abstract and depend more on a person's point of view. An *expository essay* is writing that explains or informs. Over the next series of weeks you will explore, explain and inform your audience about *one* of the thematic motifs (an idea, subject, or pattern that is regularly repeated and developed in a book) from Sandra Cisneros' novella The House on Mango Street. Following your exploration you will prepare a definition essay and presentation to share your findings with others.

**WRITING DIRECTIONS:** Write an essay exploring the meaning of your one-word thematic motif. Your essay should provide a meaningful thesis statement/controlling idea that is supported by a variety of specific details and examples. Write like you care about your thematic motif and have something important to say about it. Your final essay should be 6-8 paragraphs in length and typed in MLA format.

**THE STEPS:** PLEASE KEEP IN MIND THAT WE WILL WORK THROUGH THESE STEP BY STEP IN CLASS, SO DO NOT PANIC! ☺

- ✓ CHOOSE ONE OF THE TOPICS FROM YOUR SERIAL WRITE TO BE THE FOCUS OF YOUR ESSAY. THE TOPICS AGAIN ARE:

FREEDOM	CONFINEMENT	MATURITY	IDENTITY	HOME
COMMUNITY	GENDER ROLES	INJUSTICE	FAMILY	
HOPE				

- ✓ COMPLETE THE DATA SHEETS
- ✓ COMPLETE THE "WRITING A THESIS STATEMENT" WORKSHEET
- ✓ WRITE THE INTRODUCTION, BODY PARAGRAPHS AND CONCLUSION
- ✓ PREPARE A DRAFT OF YOUR WORKS CITED PAGE
- ✓ PARTICIPATE IN A PEER RESPONSE GROUP
- ✓ TYPE YOUR FINAL DRAFT
- ✓ PREPARE FOR YOUR PRESENTATION
- ✓ PRESENT!

#### **STANDARDS:**

##### WRITING STRATEGIES

- 1.1 Establish a coherent thesis that conveys a clear and distinctive perspective; maintain consistent tone and focus.
- 1.4 Develop main ideas within the body of the composition through supporting evidence
- 1.5 Synthesize information from multiple sources
- 1.6 Integrate quotations and citations

ENGLISH 1

THE HOUSE ON MANGO STREET

DEFINITION ESSAY—SERIAL WRITE

**FREEDOM:** *the right to do what you want without being restricted or controlled by someone else*

In what areas of your life are you most free to do what you like? In what areas of your life do you have the least freedom? What roles do gender, race, religion, education, class, age, and upbringing play in limiting an individual's personal freedom?

**CONFINEMENT:** *The act of confining. (Confining: to keep someone or something within the limits of a particular subject or activity; to keep someone in a place s/he cannot leave, such as a prison; to stop something bad from spreading to another place)*

Describe a time that you felt trapped. Who or what was confining you? What parts of your life would you most like to escape? Can you escape these elements at some point in your life? If so, how? If not, why not?

**MATURITY:** *the quality of behaving in a sensible way like an adult; the time when a person, animal, or plant is fully grown or developed*

When is someone considered "mature?" What are the physical, mental, and emotional signs of maturity? Compare the experiences of moving into a new house/apartment to the experiences of becoming a teenager.

**IDENTITY:** *who someone is; the qualities someone has that make him/her different from other people*

Where does our sense of identity come from? How does our environment shape our identity? What identities, if any, are permanent and which do we have the power to change? What roles do neighborhood and community play in shaping who we become?

**COMMUNITY:** *a group of people who live in the same town or area; the feeling that you belong to a group in which people work together and help each other; a group of people who have the same interests, religion, race, etc.; the feeling that you belong to a group in which people work together and help each other*

Where and with whom do you feel most accepted or most like you belong? Why? What are the conditions or circumstances that make you feel this way? What kinds of things do you do with this community? Did you choose this group or where you born into it? Does that matter? Explain.

**OUTCAST:** *someone who is not accepted by other people*

Describe a situation where you once felt really out of place or uncomfortable. Why did you feel this way? What does the word “outcast” mean? What kinds of attributes make people into outcasts? Why must society have outcasts?

**HOPE:** *to want something to happen or be true: the feeling that good things can or will happen*

What inspires you most in life? What do you see your future holding for you? What obstacles might stand in your way? In what ways will you attempt to overcome them and achieve your future desires?

**GENDER:** *the fact of being male or female*

Should parents/guardians raise their teenage girls in the same way that they raise their teenage boys? Why or why not? What rules should be the same for girls and boys? What should be different? Do you have brothers, sisters, cousins, etc. who are treated differently from you because of gender? Explain

**INJUSTICE:** *A situation in which people are treated very unfairly; violation of the rights of others; unjust or unfair action or treatment.*

What forms of injustice exist in our society? In your opinion, what is the biggest kind of injustice? Why? What causes people to behave unjustly to one another? What can be done to prevent injustice? Explain.

**FAMILY:** *A group of persons sharing common ancestry; all the members of a household under one roof; two or more people who share goals and values, have long-term commitments to one another, and reside usually in the same dwelling place; A fundamental social group in society typically consisting of one or two parents and their children*

What makes a family? What are its key components? How can life events change one’s definition of family? How does culture shape the expectations or roles in a family? What is the responsibility of a person to his/her family? What happens when an individual’s goals conflict with his/her family’s expectations?

**HOME:** *the place where you usually live, especially with your family; the place where you come from or your country*

What makes a place “home?” Is it possible to have more than one home? Explain. Is living in a house your family owns different from living in a house or apartment your family rents? How? Are renters, owners and homeless people all considered equal citizens in America? Why or why not?





**DIRECTIONS:** Respond to each of the following questions. Be sure to fill in all parts of the question.

THEMATIC MOTIF: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Go to <http://dictionary.reference.com/> AND TYPE IN YOUR TERM. WRITE DOWN 2-3 DICTIONARY DEFINITIONS OF YOUR THEMATIC MOTIF; CHOOSE THE DEFINITIONS YOU FEEL BEST REPRESENT YOUR WORD.

2. PROVIDE A DEFINITION FOR YOUR THEMATIC MOTIF IN YOUR OWN WORDS.

3. CLICK ON THE “THESAURUS” TAB ON THE <http://dictionary.reference.com/>. RECORD 3-5 SYNONYMS (WORDS THAT MEAN THE SAME AS) AND 3-5 ANTONYMS (WORDS THAT HAVE THE OPPOSITE MEANING). NOTE: YOU MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO FIND ANTONYMS FOR EVERY TERM

Synonyms

Antonyms

4. ASK TWO FRIENDS OR FAMILY MEMBERS FOR THEIR DEFINITIONS OF YOUR THEMATIC MOTIF. Person #1’s response:

Full name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Person #2’s response:

Full name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Create a simile for your thematic motif. (Remember that a simile is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”).

6. Quotation of a famous person. Go to <http://google.com> and type in “Quotations about \_\_\_\_\_” and find a quotation about your thematic motif. Record the quotation below. (You can also try <http://www.bartleby.com/quotations/>)

Author: \_\_\_\_\_  
url: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Find song lyrics that discuss your thematic motif. Write the lyrics as well as the artist below.

Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
Album title: \_\_\_\_\_

Artist: \_\_\_\_\_

8. Create a negative definition for your thematic motif using related terms. **For example:** *Hate is not envy or greed, though hateful people often have those feelings. Hate is not anger or spite, though it can lead us to act in angry or spiteful ways.*

9. Compare your thematic motif to related terms. **For example:** *Love is similar to passion, but one can love friends and even pets. Passion, on the other hand, is usually reserved for discussing romantic involvement.*



**Now choose the sentence above that you think is the strongest. Circle it. This is your thesis statement-what you will prove in your definition essay; the information you gathered on your data sheets will help you prove your point.**

# Introductory Paragraphs

The introductory paragraph is a critical piece of any paper that you write: it serves to hook your reader's attention, offers an overview of your paper, establishes your thesis statement/argument, and sets the tone for what is to come. As you prepare your introduction for your expository essay, you might find the following guidelines and examples useful:

## Suggested format for the Introductory Paragraph:

- **Hook:** Use one of the introduction styles detailed below to get your reader's attention. (Minimum of 1-2 sentences; could definitely be longer).
- **Overview:** An outline/summary of what you will cover in your essay. (3-4 sentences)
- **Controlling idea/Thesis Statement:** you should conclude the introductory paragraph with your *controlling idea/thesis statement!* (1-2 sentences)

The following examples of opening paragraphs are from persuasive essays written by students. Though they are engaged in a slightly different type of writing, the types of "hooks" they are using (Questions, Quotes [or statistics], Anecdotes, and Wake Up Calls) can be useful for your writing as well.

## **Introductions**

Students from Jefferson High school wrote the following introductions. As you read over the sample openings, underline the thesis statement if it is stated, write it in the space below the introduction if it is implied. Also think about what evidence the student must provide in order to prove the thesis.

### **Questions**

In his essay, "Who Framed Rasheed Rabbit," Joe Robertson asks a series of questions to engage his readers:

Do you remember that cartoon with a mighty Black prince who looked like Denzel Washington? Remember? He rescued the lovely Black princess who looked like Halle Berry? Remember how the evil white wizard, an Arnold Schwarzenegger look-alike, got chased by an angry mob of bees? Me neither. Perhaps that's because African Americans aren't cast as heroes in cartoons.

### **Quote [you can also use statistics]**

Like the question opening, the quote introduction is a classic opening. Mary Blalock begins her essay with a quote that propels her essay forward:

I once heard a quote that made me laugh. It said, "Love is the history of a woman's life and an episode in a man's." It was the kind of laugh that happens when something isn't funny, when it's only true, and it hurts. It hurts because of the women I know, both young and old, who are bright, intelligent, and who have so much going for them, but they still value their relationships with men more than their relationships with themselves and other women.

Jillian Kinney used an opening quote from an advertisement to capture her readers' attention in her essay on the role of overweight character in cartoons:

“Give us a week, and we’ll take off the weight.” “Keep the muscle, lose the fat!” scream TV and magazine commercials. Who wouldn’t want to be thin in the 1990s with scrutinizing eyes and subliminal judgments from every passing stranger? Even animated cartoons are filled with prejudicial lessons for both young and old. Look at Porky Pig, Wimpy from Popeye, Baloo the Bear from *The Jungle Book*—all fat, stupid and for the most part, the losers in society.

### **Dialogue/Anecdote**

The anecdotal opening is a small story that frames the topic of the essay personally. It can introduce characters, pose the thesis or dilemma that’s central to your argument, and get you off to a fast start. The anecdote is a tricky lead because sometimes people get so wrapped up the story that their essay gets lost.

Heather O’Brien uses a brief anecdote to make her point in her essay, “Self inflicted Sexism”

When I was in the fourth grade, my goal in life was to go to Harvard and become the first woman president. In the eighth grade, all I wanted was a boyfriend. How is it that my life could take such an abrupt turn?

At the age of nine, it’s still okay for girls to get dirty and want to learn to play the drums. By the time they reach twelve or thirteen, they’re expected to be more interested in clothes than in sports. Finding a date for the dance is more important than getting an A on the science project. Girls begin to worry about their looks and wonder how to become a model of grace and poise. Instead of reading *Discover* magazine, they invest their allowance in *Teen*.

Kaanan Yarbrough used his sisters’ love lives to start off an essay on the book *Their Eyes Were Watching God*:

After growing up in a house with three sisters, I noticed that girls can’t distinguish the good guys from the bad. They dream of a prince and he turns out to be a dog. Janie, from the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston, is a character in a dream world waiting to be swept off her feet to happiness. Like my sisters, she had to meet a few dogs before she finds that prince.

### **Wake-up Call**

Chetan Patel sounds the alarm in his essay “The Nuclear Headache,” where he exposes the federal government’s plan to store nuclear waste on Native-American land:

Fish with no eyes, fish with skin deformities, and fish with deteriorated fins and bones are being caught in the Columbian River. Soon these mutated fish will pop up all over the western United States. No joke. The government started a program to store nuclear waste on reservation lands volunteered by Native-American tribal councils.

**From: Christensen, Linda. Reading, Writing and Rising Up: Teaching About Social Justice and the Power of the Written Word. Wisconsin: Rethinking Schools, 2000.**



## *Sample Introduction:*

In her song “Talkin’ Bout a Revolution,” Tracy Chapman sings:

“Don’t you know  
They’re talkin’ about a revolution  
It sounds like a whisper  
While they’re standing in the welfare lines  
Crying at the doorsteps of those armies of salvation  
Wasting time in the unemployment lines  
Sitting around waiting for a promotion  
Poor people gonna rise up  
And get their share” (Chapman).

We see the effects of injustice everyday in our society as people work for less than a living wage, cannot get access to health care, are evicted from their houses without notice, or face a string of substitutes in a class required for graduation. Chapman talks about one response to injustice: revolution, but more often than not we do not do anything in the face of injustice. We complain about it, but do not take action. What is injustice really? The American Heritage Dictionary defines injustice as “a violation of another's rights or of what is right; a lack of justice” (“Injustice” def.1), but is it really so easy to define? We know a lack of justice when we experience it. We feel the unfairness in our guts. What looks like a violation of rights to one person, however, is actually justice to another; it all depends on one’s point of view. Since we each have our own experiences with injustice and therefore our own opinions about what injustice means, letting people tell their own stories is the best way to understand injustice.

**The House on Mango Street****DEFINITION ESSAY—BODY PARAGRAPH**

**OVERVIEW:** The purpose of the introductory paragraph in an essay is to establish the focus of your paper and state the argument you will be making (thesis); the purpose of the body paragraphs is to support that argument with evidence to show you know what you're talking about! Each body paragraph in your paper should have a clear focus and draw upon specific evidence that supports your thesis statement/interpretive claim.

**DIRECTIONS:** Writing body paragraphs is almost like a math equation or formula that requires you to plug in specific details and information. Use the following outline as you construct your body paragraphs.

**Step One:** \_\_\_\_\_

Identify to the reader what the paragraph will be about. The topic sentence should be general rather than give specific information. Your topic sentence can be phrased as a question or a statement:

Examples:

*What is gender?*

*Gender is a complex issue in our society.*

**Step Two:** \_\_\_\_\_

Identify the title, author and any necessary background information about your source before copying the quote.

Examples:

*According to the American Heritage Dictionary, gender can be defined as...*

*During an interview Erin Carlson stated, "Gender is..."*

**Step Three:** \_\_\_\_\_

Copy the evidence from the article, interview notes, book, website, etc. that will help support your point. Be sure to put the text you copy in quotation marks ("").

**Step Four:** \_\_\_\_\_

Give credit to the source where you got your information. You do this *internally* within the text of your paper using parenthetical citations as well as at the end of your paper in a formal "Works Cited" page.

*Book/ Magazine Article: (Author's last name or title and page #)*

*Example: (Weintraub 2)*

*Interview: (Last name, personal interview)*

*Example: (Carlson, interview)*

*Website: ("First four words of website's name)*

*Example: ("The Advantages of a")*

*Song Lyrics/Quotation (Artist's/ Author's Last Name)*

*Example: (Shakur)*

*Dictionary Definition ("Word" def. #)*

*Example: ("Injustice" def.1)*

**Step Five:** \_\_\_\_\_

Summarize and draw conclusions about your quote and explain to the reader how the information supports the argument you are making in your paper.

**Repeat the process in steps 2-4 for each new source you introduce in a paragraph!**

# KEY

ENGLISH 1

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

The House on Mango Street

DEFINITION ESSAY—BODY PARAGRAPH

**OVERVIEW:** The purpose of the introductory paragraph in an essay is to establish the focus of your paper and state the argument you will be making (thesis); the purpose of the body paragraphs is to support that argument with evidence to show you know what you're talking about! Each body paragraph in your paper should have a clear focus and draw upon specific evidence that supports your thesis statement/interpretive claim.

**DIRECTIONS:** Writing body paragraphs is almost like a math equation or formula that requires you to plug in specific details and information. Use the following outline as you construct your body paragraphs.

## Step One: CREATE YOUR TOPIC SENTENCE

Identify to the reader what the paragraph will be about. The topic sentence should be general rather than give specific information. Your topic sentence can be phrased as a question or a statement:

Examples:

*What is gender?*

*Gender is a complex issue in our society.*

## Step Two: INTRODUCE SOURCE

Identify the title, author and any necessary background information about your source before copying the quote.

Examples:

*According to the American Heritage Dictionary, gender can be defined as...*

*During an interview Erin Carlson stated, "Gender is..."*

## Step Three: COPY QUOTE/EVIDENCE

Copy the evidence from the article, interview notes, book, website, etc. that will help support your point. Be sure to put the text you copy in quotation marks ("").

## Step Four: CITE YOUR SOURCE

Give credit to the source where you got your information. You do this *internally* within the text of your paper using parenthetical citations as well as at the end of your paper in a formal "Works Cited" page.

Book/ Magazine Article: (Author's last name or title and page #)

Example: (Weintraub 2)

Interview: (Last name, personal interview)

Example: (Carlson, interview)

Website: ("First four words of website's name)

Example: ("The Advantages of a")

Song Lyrics/Quotation (Artist's/ Author's Last Name)

Example: (Shakur)

Dictionary Definition ("Word" def. #)

Example: ("Injustice" def.1)

## Step Five: COMMENT ON SOURCE

Summarize and draw conclusions about your quote and explain to the reader how the information supports the argument you are making in your paper.

**Repeat the process in steps 2-4 for each new source you introduce in a paragraph!**

ENGLISH 1

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_





Sean Kasugan (**PROFESSIONAL MODEL**)

English 1111

Dr. Phyllis Johnson

10 February 2005

### American Patriots: Soldiers, Citizens, Voters

The United States is presently at war in Iraq and Afghanistan where American troops are fighting and dying. At home, cars and homes display solid yellow or red, white, and blue ribbons that call for Americans to "Support Our Troops." It is patriotic for Americans to support their daughters and sons fighting in a war, but this patriotism does not mean that Americans must blindly support the decision to go to war. Being patriotic means that Americans must do the opposite: they must question their government. Questioning the government, voting, and respecting the rights of others are what make true patriots in a democratic society; blind following of one's government creates dictatorships.

The United States government is not perfect, as evidenced by its history. For example, the government sanctioned the institution of slavery, denied women the right to vote for nearly 150 years, and prolonged a war in Vietnam that the government leaders knew they couldn't win. Fortunately for the United States, in each of those cases, there were patriots that spoke out against what the United States was doing and brought about change. Without the abolitionist movement in the early nineteenth century, slavery may have existed far longer than it had already been allowed. Suffragettes from the late seventeenth century through 1920 gave women political equality—at least on paper. In more recent times, the protests of the 1960s finally led the United States to negotiate a peace long enough to get its troops out of Vietnam.

The above examples illustrate true patriotism. The government was wrong in its official positions, and the people who opposed those positions were right. Had those right-minded people not openly voiced their disapproval of what the government was doing, our history would not reflect the democratic principles it so publicly espouses. For a democracy to work, its citizens must keep informed and vocally express their approval and disapproval. The United States

government should not proclaim that protestors are not patriotic. By their very act of thinking independently from the government, they are being true patriots.

People who agree with a government's actions are patriots as well--so long as their agreements are based on how they analyze what the government is doing and base their agreement on thought and not on blind obedience. For example, patriotic proponents of the war in Afghanistan base their support on the need to eliminate Al Qaeda and not on simply accepting that the war is correct because government leaders say it is. These supporters for the war are doing so because they have analyzed why American troops are fighting there and have decided that the government is right. Patriotism is based on analysis and reasoned thought; it is not based on blind obedience.

Questioning the government is one part of the definition of an American patriot; a second part is taking that analysis of the government and acting on it through voting. To put it simply, patriots vote. However, voting for the American patriot is not simply casting ballots; it is knowing about the issues and then casting ballots. To vote for Democrats or Republicans simply because the voter has always voted for that party or because the voter's family has always voted for that party is not being patriotic; it is again being blindly obedient. Voting requires knowledge of the candidates, knowledge of the issues, and ultimately an understanding of one's own stand on the issues. For example, in 1948, Thomas Dewey was predicted by nearly all news services to win the Presidential election over incumbent Harry Truman. However, when election day was over, Truman had won by over 2 million votes. What the news services didn't realize was that the United States was full of patriotic Americans who thought about their votes and didn't simply follow trends. Truman, a supporter of stronger civil rights legislation and fighting communism in Korea, won because Americans thought about those issues and voted accordingly (Blum et al. 772).

Voting is a patriotic act, but most patriots go beyond voting and actively participate in the elections by campaigning for preferred candidates or issues. Active involvement in elections by patriotic voters creates a stronger base for candidates, who otherwise have only themselves and

paid staff on which to depend. American patriots are people who work for their country's good based on what they see as good for their country. Thus, when California citizens campaigned for Barbara Boxer in 1992 for the United States Senate, they were actively working for increased funding for crime prevention and paramedic training, two issues about which Boxer has been actively vocal ("The Issues"). These people were telling the rest of California that they believed that Boxer's work for these issues would make a better California and United States. Just as patriotic soldiers volunteered for the Continental Army in 1774 to create a new nation that would better their lives, so did patriotic soldier voters volunteer for the Boxer campaign in 1992 to create a better world. Patriots are voters and workers!

Lastly, and most importantly, patriots respect the rights of others and demonstrate by actively contributing to the equal rights of all Americans. One specific action that patriots perform is willingly paying taxes. Without tax income, the national, state, and local governments would not be able to function. People would go uneducated, hungry, and sick in a world without police protection, good roads, schools, and government-funded health care for those citizens who cannot afford it. Patriots may wish that they could have the tax money in their own pockets, but patriots also realize that this tax money is necessary for a country that must meet the needs of all its citizens. Paying taxes shows respect for the government and for its citizens through being an active contribution to a stable, democratic society.

Another specific patriotic action is showing respect for other cultures. Following the Al Qaeda terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, reports came in of individual attacks on Muslims and people of Arab heritage in the United States. A Pakistani store owner was killed in Dallas; two Egyptian-Americans were killed in separate incidents in California; and in Gary, Indiana, a man turned an assault rifle on an Yemeni-born United States citizen. In what is probably the worst incident, 300 Americans marched in Chicago in an anti-Arab parade, with one man proclaiming, "I'm proud to be an American, and I hate Arabs, and I always have" (Robinson). Well, patriotic Americans are not proud of him. An American patriot understands that in a democratic nation, an entire group is not judged by the actions of a few individuals. If a group

were to be judged by a few individuals, then all Caucasian, Christian Americans should be hated because the bombers at the Oklahoma Federal building were white, Christian, American citizens.

The traditional picture of an American patriot is of a soldier in uniform, proudly carrying the American flag and a rifle. But that picture falls seriously short of the true picture of an American patriot. The true picture would show millions of people, of all races and heritage, some carrying protest signs, some handing out campaign literature, and everyone carrying a ballot.

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Return to Doing the Definition Essay or OWL.

<http://www.northland.cc.mn.us/owl/Doing%20the%20definition%20essay.htm>

## **Works Cited Page**

**Overview:** A **works cited page** is an *unnumbered, alphabetical* listing of sources that shows your reader where you got your information. Works cited pages are a little tedious to do, but are a REQUIREMENT of all research projects. Though there are many different styles of documenting sources, we will be using MLA format; examples of the proper way to cite sources are listed below.

**Format:** Works cited pages are picky! There are different ways to cite different sources and you need to follow strict guidelines in terms of capitalization, punctuation, spelling and spacing. The first word of every entry is capitalized. The second and third lines of works cited entries are indented. Double-space individual entries, and double space between entries.

**Directions:** Use the following samples and keys to format your own Works Cited page. Be sure to follow the guidelines outlined above.

### ***book w/author***

#### **Sample:**

Butler, Octavia. Parable of the Sower. New York: Warner Books, Inc., 1993.

#### **Key:**

Author's last name, first name. Title of the Book. City of publication: Publisher, Date published

### ***personal interview***

#### **Sample:**

Smith, John. Personal interview. 7 Jan. 2001.

#### **Key:**

Interviewee's last name, first name. Personal interview. Date interviewed.

### ***songs, lyrics***

#### **Sample:**

Nas. "Project Windows." Nastradamus. Sony Music Entertainment, Inc., 1999.

#### **Key:**

Artist's last name, first name. "Title of Song." Title of Album. Producer, Date of Release.

### ***website***

#### **Sample:**

"Courtly Love." Geoffrey Chaucer Page. Harvard U. 31 Jan. 2002.

<<http://icg.fas.harvard.edu/-chaucer/special/lifemann/love>>

#### **Key:**

Author (if given). "Title of Page." Name of organization. Date visited <location or url> in angle brackets.

### ***article in a dictionary***

#### **Sample:**

"Addiction." American Heritage Dictionary. 2nd college edition, 1985.

#### **Key:**

Word." Title of Dictionary. Edition of Dictionary, Date of Publication