

Definition Essay - Language Identity

Due November 21st, 2016 (Date subject to change)

What is a definition essay?

A **definition** offers an explanation or illustration of a word, object, or concept. Most concrete objects -- ie. tree, window, computer, pencil, etc. -- have a definition that people can agree on through the use of their physical senses. However, abstract terms, *love*, *pain*, or *patriotism*, have different meanings for different individuals since such terms play on people's feelings more than their physical senses.

There are two types of definitions: an **extended definition** goes beyond the dictionary definition by expanding on and illustrating in detail a complex, general, or abstract term in order to give the readers a clearer understanding of the term. The purpose of an **extended definition essay** is to communicate knowledge about the meaning of a term, to prompt the audience to reflect on a term's meaning, and to persuade the reader of the legitimacy or validity of your definition.

For this assignment, you will choose one of the following topics and **construct and original definition** based on your understanding of the term.

- >> English (as a language)
- >> A particular language or subset of a language (Chicano Spanish, slang, AAVE, etc.)
- >> American (as citizenry)
- >> Other options as approved by teacher

How should this be formatted?

Final products will be:

- >> Typed
- >> Proper Heading
- >> Centered Assignment Title
- >> Double Spaced
- >> Times New Roman 12 point font

Step 1: Brainstorming

Use the following questions to help guide your brainstorming:

- 1.) What does it mean to speak/be _____?
- 2.) What qualities does someone who speaks _____ have? What do they lack?
- 3.) What qualities does someone from this country have? What do they lack?
- 4.) How is this language different from others?

Use the space provided to brainstorm:

Step 2: Choosing a topic and definition

What topic are you choosing for your paper?

How do you define it?

Step 3: Defining the Term

In order to define language/citizenship/etc., you need to explore some things about the word itself. Explore the following and record your findings in the space below:

- What is the denotative meanings? Check out Oxford English Dictionary!

- What is the connotative meaning? Check out sites like Urban Dictionary. What ideas, feelings, images, etc. do you associate with this term?

- What are synonyms for your term? What are antonyms for your term? What are associated words? (This may not be totally possible, but check out misconceptions)

- Find evidence from the texts provided, or outside sources to expand/support your understanding. Search "what it means to be..." or "what it means to speak..."

- Think of an anecdote (a personal example or story) that illustrates your term.

- Think of other examples from history, current events, or literature that illustrate your term.

- What power is afforded to those who are _____ or speak _____? What power do they lack? What would it be like if we didn't have _____?

- Survey people around you. What does _____ mean to them?

Extended Definition Essay Outline

- I. Introduction
 - A. Hook
 - B. [choose two or more of the following strategies to introduce your term]
 1. Origin of the term
 2. Denotative meaning
 3. Connotative meaning
 4. Possible negatives associated with the term
 5. How this term is different from others
 6. Use an image, simile, or metaphor to describe the term
 7. Discuss what your term is not
 - C. Discuss this term as it relates to identity
 - D. Thesis statement [Definition] - [TERM] is....

- II. Body Paragraphs
(the number of body paragraphs is determined by the number of parts in your thesis)
 - A. Claim - A part of the definition
 - B. Evidence [can be anecdotal or from text] + citation if necessary
 - C. Explanation - discuss how/why this evidence illustrates the part of the definition mentioned in the claim.
 - D. Connection / Warrant (Honors) - discuss how/why this is important to being/speaking _____.

- III. Conclusion - based on your definition and examples, why is this term important? Why does it determine one's **identity**? Expand to a global perspective of this language or nationality.