

Composition Project: Writing a Media Opinion Essay

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Ohio University

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Dedicated to Michelle

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Introduction

This free pdf download describes a composition assignment that I have used successfully during my years of teaching at Ohio University.

Other teachers are welcome to download and read this pdf file and decide whether this assignment will work in their classes. Of course, other teachers may modify the assignment as desired for their classes.

The pdf file is divided into two main sections following this brief introduction.

First is a description of the assignment. Of course, teachers can modify the assignment as they wish.

Following that are some examples of media opinion essays. Teachers may print them and use them as examples for their students.

What Do I Have to Do for the Media Opinion Essay?

- You will write 750-1,250 words. Do not write fewer than 750 words. Do not write more than 1,250 words.
- You will write “To the Editor” at the top of your paper.
- The readers will be the readers of a newspaper such as your local hometown newspaper.
- You will NOT have a Bibliography or a Works Cited list.
- You will NOT have in-text citations.
- You will indicate your sources by writing such things as, “According to [name of author], in his [or her] article titled [title of article] in [name of publication], [...].”
- You will use quotation marks when quoting word for word.
- You will quote sparingly. Do not quote at length. You should not use long quotations in a short media opinion essay.

Note: At the top of your media opinion essay, you may write the following note. You have my permission to copy this and use it word for word. I will not consider it plagiarism.

To the Editor: Here is an opinion piece that I hope that you will publish. I am submitting it through e-mail so that you don't have to retype it. To verify that I have indeed written this opinion piece, you may call me at 330-123-4567 during working hours.

Note: If you require your students to write a long research paper in your course, you may wish to require your students to write their media opinion essay on the same topic as their long research paper. That way, students will start researching their long research paper early. I allow my students to use their media opinion essay word for word (or slightly revised) as part of their long research paper. For an example, see the essays by David Bruce in Appendix A. (I occasionally write the same kind of papers that I require my students to write; it helps me to learn the writing process that I am trying to teach my students.) One essay is the short media opinion essay, and the other is the long research paper. In Appendix B are short media opinions essays by my students.

Checklist for Media Opinion Essay (for Essays that Make an Argument)

1. You will need a short note to the editor. You have my permission to use the short note below. I will not consider that to be plagiarism. (Use your own telephone number, of course.)

To the Editor: Here is an opinion piece that I hope that you will publish. I am submitting it through e-mail so that you don't have to retype it. To verify that I have indeed written this opinion piece, you may call me at 593-1234 during working hours.

2. You will need a byline and a word count. For example: By Jane Student (832 words).

3. You will need a title.

4. You will need to have written between 750 and 1,250 words. Do not write fewer than 750 words. Do not write more than 1,250 words.

5. You will need to write an introduction or a lede that immediately captures the readers' attention.

"Lede" is also spelled "lede."

lead: the introductory section of a story; "it was an amusing lead-in to a very serious matter"

Source: wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn

6. You will need *pathos*—the human element. You should tell a story that is related to the subject of your essay. For example, if you are writing an opinion essay that argues against lowering the drinking age to 18, you may tell a story about an underage drinker who died of alcohol poisoning. This may be your lede.

7. You will need *logos*—rational argumentation. This will come from the research that you do. You will need to give the sources of your information. For example, "According to"

8. You will need *ethos*—fair argumentation. One way to argue fairly is to bring up objections to your arguments. State the objections fairly, and then rebut them. Do not mislead the readers. Use actual, not made-up statistics.

9. You will need to make arguments for what you believe.

10. You will need to rebut arguments against what you believe.

11. You will need to point out the benefits of accepting what you are arguing. For example: If you are arguing for the legalization of marijuana, point out the benefits of legalizing marijuana.

12. You will need to be interesting. Don't bore the reader.

13. You will need to avoid plagiarism. Use quotation marks when quoting word for word. Give credit where credit is due.
14. You will need to write a conclusion that definitely says FINIS to your essay.
15. Remember that newspapers use quotation marks, not italics, for titles.

Teacher's Expectations for the Peer Review

Your teacher expects you to do these things:

- Bring a complete, carefully proofread draft to the peer review. Better, bring two copies. At this time, it should be a complete draft with all visual aids and all steps. Remember that you must have at least one original (meaning that you have created it) visual aid in your Set of Instructions.
- Actively read the other person's draft and seriously look for errors that the writer can correct.
- Tell the writer something that he or she has done well.
- Seriously give good advice to the writer about what the writer can do to improve his or her paper.
- Listen carefully to the other person's comments about your paper. Don't be defensive, even if you disagree with some of the other person's comments.
- Try to get at least two peer reviews.
- If you have time after getting the peer reviews, look over and evaluate your paper.
- Don't ask the teacher, "Can we leave now?"

Proofreading Tips

Occasionally, students type "the the" when they mean to type "the." One way to check this is to use the FIND command of your word processing program. A word processing program will often have an EDIT menu. In the EDIT menu, you will often find a FIND command. You can type in "the the," and your word processing program will find every "the the" you have typed in a document. You can also do this for other repeated words: "or or," "an an," etc.

Be sure to use the Checklist. It identifies common errors that you should avoid making.

What Do I Have to Do for the Peer Review?

What is a Peer Review?

In a peer review, you exchange drafts of your communication with other members of the course. They evaluate your writing, you evaluate their writing, then both of you talk about each other's writing, telling what the other person has done right and how the other person can improve his or her communication.

Bring a Good Draft—Not a Zero Draft—to the Review

A zero draft is a seriously incomplete draft. For example, a student may arrive at a peer review with only the first 12 steps of a Set of Instructions. Zero drafts receive zero credit. Bring full drafts to the peer reviews. In some (perhaps all) cases, I may cancel the conference of a student who brings a zero draft to a peer review. I don't want my time wasted, and I don't want the time of the peer reviewers wasted.

What Do You Need to Bring to the Peer Review?

- Two typed copies of the second (or third) draft of your Instructions.
- A full draft, with visual aids, beginning, middle, and end, not a partial draft.
- An alert mind.

Review Your Previously Graded Papers

Are you making the same mistakes over and over? If so, sit down and study and learn not to make those mistakes. Study any handouts I have given you about common errors in grammar and punctuation. Try not to make the mistakes you have made previously. It's up to you to learn this; the teacher can't learn it for you. Many students do not make many errors in punctuation and grammar; unfortunately, they make the same mistakes over and over.

Peer Review Sheet for Media Opinion Essay (for Essays that Make an Argument)

1. Does the author have a short note to the editor? The author has my permission to use the short note below. I will not consider that to be plagiarism. (The author should use his or her own telephone number, of course.)

To the Editor: Here is an opinion piece that I hope that you will publish. I am submitting it through e-mail so that you don't have to retype it. To verify that I have indeed written this opinion piece, you may call me at 593-1234 during working hours.

2. Does the author have a byline and a word count? For example: By Jane Student (832 words).

3. Does the author have a title?

4. Does the author write between 750 and 1,250 words? Do not write fewer than 750 words. Do not write more than 1,250 words.

5. Does the author an introduction or a lede that immediately captures the readers' attention?

“Lede” is also spelled “lede.”

lead: the introductory section of a story; “it was an amusing lead-in to a very serious matter”

Source: wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn

6. Does the author use *pathos*—the human element? The author should tell a story that is related to the subject of the author's essay. For example, if the author is writing an opinion essay that argues against lowering the drinking age to 18, the author may tell a story about an underage drinker who died of alcohol poisoning. This may be the author's lede.

7. Does the author use *logos*—rational argumentation? This will come from the research that the author does.

8. Does the author give the sources of the author's information? For example, “According to”

9. Does the author use *ethos*—fair argumentation? One way to argue fairly is to bring up objections to your arguments. State the objections fairly, and then rebut them. Do not mislead the readers. Use actual, not made-up statistics.

10. Does the author make arguments for what the author believes?

11. Does the author rebut arguments against what the author believes?

12. Does the author point out the benefits of accepting what the author is arguing? For example: If the author is arguing for the legalization of marijuana, the author should point out the benefits of legalizing marijuana.

13. Is the author interesting? The author should not bore the reader.

14. Does the author avoid plagiarism? Does the author use quotation marks when quoting word for word? Does the author give credit where credit is due?

15. Does the author write a conclusion that definitely says FINIS to the author's essay?

16. Does the author remember that newspapers use quotation marks, not italics, for titles?

17. Of course, help the author as much as you can with proofreading.

Appendix A: Sample Media Opinion Essay and Long Research Paper

Following this page are two essays. One essay is a short media opinion essay, and the other is a long research paper on the same topic.

To the Editor:

Here is an opinion piece that I hope that you will publish. I am submitting it through e-mail so that you don't have to retype it. To verify that I have indeed written this opinion piece, you may call me at 593-1234 during working hours.

Same-Sex Civil Marriage: Pro

By David Bruce (1,099 words)

I know some gays and lesbians, and I like them and realize that they are capable of long-term, committed, same-sex relationships. I would not deny them the ability to marry someone they love simply because they love someone of the same sex as themselves. Therefore, I am for same-sex civil marriage.

Arguments For Same-Sex Marriage

My main reason for wanting to allow same-sex couples to be legally joined in a civil marriage is that marriage is a way for committed couples, whether same sex or opposite sex, to show love and commitment to each other. Many same-sex couples have been together for years, are deeply in love, and wish to be married. Kathy Belge tells the story of how she came to be married to Tay, her partner of almost twelve years, in her online article "A Lesbian Marriage: I Wed My True Love."

In February 2004 she and her partner went to San Francisco in order to be legally married. Ms. Belge was so nervous that she held out the wrong hand for her partner to put the ring on. Ms. Belge had to take the ring off and put it on the correct hand. Ms. Belge writes, "They say every woman dreams of her wedding day. As a child, I never did. But if I had, I don't think I could have imagined a day with more meaning. It meant so much to be able to share that

moment with so many other couples. My wedding day was not just about me and my beloved. It was about making a statement for the rights of people everywhere to be able to love whom they please.”

All adult same-sex couples who wish to be married should have the same right to be married in civil ceremonies as adult opposite-sex couples. In addition, same-sex couples need to be married to enjoy important rights that heterosexual married couples have. Mary Bonauto, Project Director, Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD), wrote this on the GLAD Web site on 15 August 2003: “While gay and lesbian families can protect themselves in limited ways by creating wills, health-care proxies and co-parent adoptions, this does not come close to emulating the automatic protections and peace of mind that marriage confers. People cannot contract their way into changing pension laws, survivorship rights, worker’s-compensation dependency protection or the tax system, to name just a few.”

Evidence for this can be found in the experience of many gay and lesbian couples. For example, Kenneth Jost, whose *CQ Researcher* article “Gay Marriage: Should Same-Sex Unions Be Legally Recognized?” appears online (subscription required), writes about Bill Flanigan and Robert Daniel, a gay couple in San Francisco, who protected themselves as much as possible by registering themselves as domestic partners under a San Francisco law. In addition, Daniel executed a health-care proxy. This proxy allowed Flanigan to make medical decisions for Daniel, who had AIDS.

Unfortunately, on Oct. 16, 2000, Daniel was admitted to the University of Maryland’s Shock Trauma Center in Baltimore. Because Daniel and Flanigan were not legally married, and despite the health-care proxy that Daniel had executed, Flanigan was not allowed to see Daniel in his hospital room. Not until four hours had passed and Daniel’s mother and sister arrived was

Flanigan allowed to see Daniel. By then, Daniel was unconscious, and he died before the two men were able to say goodbye.

Jost also points out that legal marriage gives other rights that unmarried gay and lesbian couples do not enjoy. For example, under the law marital communications are confidential: A spouse cannot be made to testify against his or spouse. Marriage also has important financial and tax benefits. For example, Richard Linnell has a health policy that covers the child whom he and his partner, Gary Chalmers, adopted, but to have Chalmers covered by the policy, Linnell has to pay extra. In addition, Gloria Bailey and Linda Davies, a lesbian couple, will have to pay taxes when they retire and sell their home and joint psychotherapy practice—taxes that a married couple would not have to pay.

Rebuttal of an Argument Against Same-Sex Marriage

One argument that is sometimes made against legalizing same-sex marriage is that legalizing same-sex marriage would require churches to marry same-sex couples. This is not true. In the United States, the First Amendment guarantees religious freedom: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” In the United States, church and state are separated. If Congress were to pass a law that legalized same-sex marriage, that law would apply only to civil marriages. Churches would still be able to marry whomever they wish, and they would still be able *not* to marry whomever they wish.

By the way, the late Monty Python member Graham Chapman once appeared on a TV talk show, in which he discussed his homosexuality. A viewer wrote in to the talk show, enclosing in her letter some prayers for Chapman’s soul, as well as the Biblical injunction that if

a man lie with another, he shall be taken out and killed. Python member Eric Idle read the viewer's letter, then wrote her in reply, "We've taken him out and killed him!"

Conclusion

I believe that same-sex marriage ought to be legal, and I hope that you agree that it ought to be legal, too. Of course, I am not advocating that churches ought to be forced to marry same-sex couples. I am simply saying that same-sex couples ought to be allowed by the government to have civil marriages. In doing so, same-sex married couples would have all the rights of opposite-sex married couples. In addition, they would be able to express their love and commitment to each other.

All of us should be as accepting of gays and lesbians as country music superstar Garth Brooks, whose sister is lesbian. Brooks made a pro-gay (and pro-freedom-of-religion) statement in his song "We Shall Be Free": "When we're free to love anyone we choose, / When this world's big enough for all different views, / When we're all free to worship from our own kind of pew, / Then we shall be free."

Brooks also made a pro-love statement in that song, which celebrates love, whether it is between people of different races or people of the same sex. His sister helped educate Brooks, who is heterosexual, simply by being who she was. Brooks says, "The longer you live with it, the more you realize that it's just another form of people loving each other."

Questions for Same-Sex Civil Marriage: Pro

- **What are the purposes of the section addressed to the editor?**
- **How is the format of this paper different from the MLA format?**
- **How long are the opinion essays written by Paul Krugman for *The New York Times*?**
- **Is 1,099 words long for many newspaper opinion essays?**
- **What is the advantage of using subheads in this media opinion essay (and in academic papers)?**

David Bruce (3,160 words)

Professor Smith

ENG 151

21 December 2009

Same-Sex Civil Marriage: Pro

[1] I am for same-sex civil marriage. Although I am not gay, some people erroneously think that I am gay. In part because of that reason, I tend to support gay rights, including the right of civil marriage. Because some people think that I am gay, I tend to have solidarity with gay people. In addition, I know some gays and lesbians, and I like them and realize that they are capable of long-term, committed, same-sex relationships. I would not deny them the ability to marry someone they love simply because they love someone of the same sex as themselves. In this paper, I will make some arguments for same-sex marriage, and I will rebut some arguments against same-sex marriage. Because many people's opposition to same-sex marriage rests on the incorrect assumption that homosexuality is against nature, I will also show that homosexuality is common among animals. When you finish reading this paper, I hope that you will agree with me that gays have the right to a civil marriage.

Arguments For Same-Sex Marriage

[2] My main reason for wanting to allow same-sex couples to be legally joined in a civil marriage is that marriage is a way for committed couples, whether same sex or opposite sex, to show love and commitment to each other. Many same-sex couples have been together for years, are deeply in love, and wish to be married. Kathy Belge tells the story of how she came to be married to Tay, her partner of almost twelve years, in her article "A Lesbian Marriage: I Wed My True Love." In February 2004 she and her partner went to San Francisco in order to be

legally married. At first, it seemed as if they would not be able to get married simply because of the number of same-sex couples waiting to be married. Ms. Belge writes that normally the mayor's office processed about 30 marriages in a normal day; however, after same-sex marriage became legal in San Francisco, the mayor's office had been processing about 400 marriages per day. Although it seemed that Ms. Belge and her partner would not be able to get married that day, they declined to leave. Their persistence paid off, and they were married later that day. Ms. Belge was so nervous that she held out the wrong hand for her partner to put the ring on. Ms. Belge had to take the ring off and put it on the correct hand. Ms. Belge writes,

They say every woman dreams of her wedding day. As a child, I never did. But if I had, I don't think I could have imagined a day with more meaning. It meant so much to be able to share that moment with so many other couples. My wedding day, [sic] was not just about me and my beloved. It was about making a statement for the rights of people everywhere to be able to love whom they please. ("A Lesbian Marriage")

All adult same-sex couples who wish to be married should have the same right to be married in civil ceremonies as adult opposite-sex couples.

[3] In addition, same-sex couples need to be married to enjoy important rights that heterosexual married couples have. Mary Bonauto, Project Director, Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD), wrote this on the GLAD Web site on 15 August 2003:

While gay and lesbian families can protect themselves in limited ways by creating wills, health-care proxies and co-parent adoptions, this does not come close to emulating the automatic protections and peace of mind that marriage confers. People cannot contract their way into changing pension laws,

survivorship rights, worker's-compensation dependency protection or the tax system, to name just a few. (qtd. in Jost)

Evidence for this can be found in the experience of many gay and lesbian couples. For example, Bill Flanigan and Robert Daniel, who were a gay couple in San Francisco, protected themselves as much as possible by registering themselves as domestic partners under a San Francisco law. In addition, Mr. Daniel executed a health-care proxy. This proxy allowed Mr. Flanigan to make medical decisions for Mr. Daniel, who had AIDS. Unfortunately, on Oct. 16, 2000, Mr. Daniel was admitted to the University of Maryland's Shock Trauma Center in Baltimore. Because Mr. Daniel and Mr. Flanigan were not legally married, and despite the health-care proxy that Mr. Daniel had executed, Mr. Flanigan was not allowed to see Mr. Daniel in his hospital room. Not until four hours had passed and Mr. Daniel's mother and sister arrived was Mr. Flanigan allowed to see Mr. Daniel. By then, Mr. Daniel was unconscious, and he died before the two men were able to say goodbye (Jost).

[4] Legal marriage also gives other rights that gay and lesbian couples do not enjoy. For example, under the law marital communications are confidential: A spouse cannot be made to testify against his or spouse. Marriage also has important financial and tax benefits. For example, Richard Linnell has a health policy that covers the child whom he and his partner, Gary Chalmers, adopted, but to have Mr. Chalmers covered by the policy, Mr. Linnell has to pay extra (Jost). In addition, Gloria Bailey and Linda Davies, a lesbian couple, will have to pay taxes when they retire and sell their home and joint psychotherapy practice—taxes that a married couple would not have to pay (Jost).

Rebuttals of Arguments Against Same-Sex Marriage

[5] One argument that is often made against legalizing same-sex marriage is that legalizing same-sex marriage would require churches to marry same-sex couples. This is not true. In the United States, the First Amendment guarantees religious freedom: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof” (U.S. Constitution). In the United States, church and state are separated. If Congress were to pass a law that legalized same-sex marriage, that law would apply only to civil marriages. Churches would still be able to marry whomever they wish, and they would still be able not to marry whomever they wish.

[6] Another argument that is often made against same-sex marriage is that homosexuality is against God’s wishes as revealed in the Bible. Those critics sometimes say that the book of Genesis tells us about Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. However, a Catholic priest who has argued well against this belief is Daniel A. Helminiak, author of *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality*. In his “Preface to the Millennium Edition,” Helminiak says that the goal of his book, which was first printed in 1994, “was to make available in easily readable form a summary of a growing body of scholarly literature on homosexuality in the Bible. Even in 1994, the inevitable conclusion of the scholarly research was already clear. Taken on its own terms and in its own time, the Bible nowhere condemns homosexuality as we know it today” (13). Helminiak does not advocate a literal interpretation of the Bible in which “a text means whatever it means to somebody reading it today” (33). Instead, he advocates a historical-critical reading of the Bible in which “a text means whatever it meant to the people who wrote it long ago” (33). Both ways of reading the Bible agree that the Bible is the Word of God.

[7] Should a text mean whatever it means to people today, or should it mean whatever it meant to the person or people who wrote it? Let's take a look at a passage from *The Silver Chair*, one of the children's novels in C.S. Lewis's Chronicles of Narnia, a series of books with Christian themes. The characters Puddleglum, Scrubb, and Jill are among some dangerous giants. Puddleglum wants the children Scrubb and Jill, as well as himself, to pretend to be "[a]s if we hadn't a care in the world. Frolicsome" (103). The children agree to the plan, and a little later we read this about Jill: "She made love to everyone—the grooms, the porters, the housemaids, the ladies-in-waiting, and the elderly giant lords whose hunting days were past. She submitted to being kissed and pawed about [...]" (107). How should we interpret the phrase "made love to" in this passage? To today's readers, "made love to" means "had sex with," but that hardly seems to be the best way to interpret this passage from a Christian novel for children. What did C.S. Lewis, the author of the passage, intend by the phrase? *The Silver Chair* was first published in 1953, when to make love to meant to flirt with someone and be charming. That meaning is obsolete now, but it is the meaning with which Lewis used the phrase. Jill is not having sex with all these characters in the novel; she is simply being charming and making them like her.

[8] Possibly, someone could argue that God will make sure that the words in the Bible have the meaning that He wants them to have. However, this is incorrect. For example, a 1631 edition of the King James Bible contained this remarkable typo: "Thou shalt commit adultery" (its translation of Exodus 20:14); however, the translators had no ill intention (North). Because of this typo, this edition of the Bible is known as the "Wicked Bible."

[9] When it comes to understanding what the Bible says about same-sex relationships, we have to understand what the authors of the Bible meant by same-sex relationships. In our modern culture, we know that gay men and gay women can have loving same-sex relationships.

However, what is referred to in the Bible as homosexual acts are not of that kind. For example, in the story of Sodom (Genesis 19:1-19), the men of Sodom wanted to rape the angels to whom Lot was providing hospitality. Here the offense is rape and inhospitality, not a condemnation of homosexuality as we know it today. Helminiak writes, “Not homosexuality but hardheartedness is the offense of Gibeah [see Judges 19] and of Sodom” (47).

[10] According to Leviticus 18:22, “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination” (qtd. in Helminiak 51). Leviticus 20:13 states, “If a man lie with a man as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death, their blood is upon them” (qtd. in Helminiak 51). Here the Bible condemns the penetration of one man sexually by another man, but Helminiak looks at the reasons why this kind of sex is condemned. The condemnation occurs in what is called the Holiness Code of Leviticus, which is concerned with keeping Israel “holy” in the sight of God (Helminiak 53). To be holy is to be set apart. The author of Leviticus was concerned with keeping the Jews different from the Gentiles. At the time, Gentiles such as the Canaanites permitted the penetration of one man sexually by another man. Helminiak writes, “The point is that The Holiness Code of Leviticus prohibits male same-sex acts for religious reasons, not for sexual reasons. The concern is to keep Israel distinct from the Gentiles. Homosexual sex is forbidden because it is associated with Gentile identity” (54). In the Common Era, of course, Christianity is a major religion of the Gentiles. Helminiak uses an analogy here. At one time Catholics did not eat meat on Friday. Of course, nothing is wrong with eating meat. But the Catholics were concerned with acting like Catholics and with not acting the same way as Protestants. A Catholic who then ate meat on Friday was guilty of an offense against a religious responsibility (55). Of course, a Catholic who now eats meat on Friday is not guilty of an offense against a religious responsibility.

[11] Leviticus 20:13 advocates the death penalty for gay penetrative sex, and Leviticus 20:9 advocates the death penalty for cursing one's parents: "For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him" (King James Version). Today, we do not advocate putting to death a person who curses his parents, nor do we advocate putting to death a person who is homosexual. The circumstances that led the writer of Leviticus to prescribe the death penalty for these actions have changed. By the way, the late Monty Python member Graham Chapman once appeared on a TV talk show, in which he discussed his homosexuality. A viewer wrote in to the talk show, enclosing in her letter some prayers for Chapman's soul. She also mentioned "the biblical injunction that if a man lie with another he shall be taken out and killed." Python member Eric Idle read the viewer's letter, then wrote her in reply, "We've taken him out and killed him!" (Hay 158).

[12] Helminiak examines other Biblical passages that seem to condemn homosexuality; his book is well worth a read. Reading his book can make people much more accepting of gays and lesbians. For example, when gay author Michael Thomas Ford came out to his sister, her response was, "Well, you know I'm okay with it, but God says it's wrong, so you're probably going to hell" (Ford 115). If Ford's sister had read this book, she may not have said to her brother that he would probably go to hell.

[13] An argument that is often made against homosexuality in general is that it is unnatural. However, homosexuality is widely practiced in nature by animals, as scientists are beginning to discover. Joan Roughgarden, a professor of biology at Stanford University, is one of several scientists who have studied homosexual behavior among non-human vertebrates. In the introduction to her book *Evolution's Rainbow: Diversity, Gender, and Sexuality in Nature*

and People, Ms. Roughgarden writes, “Much of this book presents the gee-whiz of vertebrate diversity [including] how species incorporate same-sex courtship, including sexual contact, as regular parts of their social systems” (2). In an article about Ms. Roughgarden and her book, Jonah Lehrer wrote,

Giraffes have all-male orgies. So do bottlenose dolphins, killer whales, gray whales, and West Indian manatees. Japanese macaques, on the other hand, are ardent lesbians; the females enthusiastically mount each other. Bonobos, one of our closest primate relatives, are similar, except that their lesbian sexual encounters occur every two hours. Male bonobos engage in “penis fencing,” which leads, surprisingly enough, to ejaculation. They also give each other genital massages. (“The Effeminate Sheep”)

Ms. Roughgarden believes that sex has more than just the purpose of human reproduction; it can simply be a way to have fun or to create social bonds.

[14] Other scientists have also studied the gay animal kingdom. Bruce Bagemihl spent ten years researching his book titled *Biological Exuberance: Animal Homosexuality and Natural Diversity*. Part of his book is devoted to showing the reaction of researchers when they realized that the animals that they were studying were gay. Susan McCarthy, in reviewing Bagemihl’s book, wrote this: “One unusually candid biologist wrestled with the realization that the bighorn rams he studied frequently had sex with each other, and weren’t just showing nice wholesome aggression. ‘To state that the males had evolved a homosexual society was emotionally beyond me. To conceive of those magnificent beasts as ‘queers’—Oh God!’” (“The Fabulous Kingdom of Gay Animals”). In *Biological Exuberance* Bagemihl writes, “Homosexual behavior occurs in more than 450 different kinds of animals worldwide, and is found in every major geographic

region and every major animal group” (12). The main point here, of course, is that homosexual behavior is found in the natural world. If homosexual behavior is natural for animals, then we can justifiably assume that it is natural for human beings. After all, we are another species of animal, and if it were not natural for some—of course, not all—of us, then we would not see homosexuality among human beings.

Conclusion

[15] I believe that same-sex marriage ought to be legal, and I hope that you agree that it ought to be legal, too. Of course, I am not advocating that churches ought to be forced to marry same-sex couples. I am simply saying that same-sex couples ought to be allowed by the government to have civil marriages. In doing so, same-sex married couples would have all the rights of opposite-sex married couples. In addition, they would be able to express their love and commitment to each other.

[16] All of us should be as accepting of gays and lesbians as country music superstar Garth Brooks, whose sister is lesbian. Mr. Brooks made a pro-gay (and pro-freedom-of-religion) statement in his song “We Shall Be Free”:

When we’re free to love anyone we choose,
 When this world’s big enough for all different views,
 When we’re all free to worship from our own kind of pew,
 Then we shall be free, (sing365.com)

Mr. Brooks also made a pro-love statement in that song, which celebrates love, whether it is between people of different races or people of the same sex. His sister helped educate Mr. Brooks, who is heterosexual, simply by being who she was. Mr. Brooks says, “The longer you

live with it, the more you realize that it's just another form of people loving each other" (Wren 58-59).

College 8

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Appendix B: Sample Media Opinion Essays

Following this page are some examples of media opinion essays. Teachers may print them and use them as examples for their students.

To the Editor: Here is an opinion piece that I hope that you will publish. I am submitting it through e-mail so that you don't have to retype it. To verify that I have indeed written this opinion piece, you may call me at 789-123-4567 during working hours.

Racism's Everlasting Imprint on the World

By Alyssa Meckert (963 words)

"Racism in America is not ancient history. It is still swirling around us, lurking below the cover of decency," says Stephen Bowman, an author from "Tikkun" magazine. His feelings about racism are a good depiction of American society and the acts of racism still present in the world today.

William A. Darity, the editor of the article "Racism" that was published online in the "International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences," says racism has been a part of everyday life for thousands of years. The article stated that "in the 1930s the term racism was first used by the German physician Magnus Hirschfeld to describe the ideology upon which the Nazis based their identification of the Jews as members of an alien, subordinate, and dangerous race." Another place racism was seen was during slavery in the United States. According to Jeff Plunkett, an author for Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center online, at the start of the Civil War, almost 4 million Africans were slaves in America. Racism in America has been a problem and will continue to be a problem for some time, but in my opinion, several solutions can be made in order to reduce the severity and spread of it.

One personal experience I have encountered was in inner-city Akron at Akron Arlington Head Start. I volunteered there my senior year of high school and worked with a group of 20 disadvantaged minority students. One student in particular stands out in my mind, Raimon.

Raimon was five years old and had no parental guidance in his life. He lived with his grandmother and older siblings because both of his parents were in prison for dealing drugs. By working with Raimon, I was able to understand the effect that being a minority had on his life and the everyday challenges he faced. Also by working at the head start with Raimon, I learned how different the schooling is in middle- to upper-class areas versus lower-income areas. After working at Akron Arlington Head Start, I began to wonder what solutions could be made in order to improve the lives of the less fortunate in the area of education.

The first solution in trying to create an equal education opportunity for all is offering a high-quality education for people of all races. Personally, I attended an almost completely white high school that was ranked one of the top schools in the state. However, Akron Public Schools were located close to my high school and their test scores, funding, and graduation rates were far lower than my school. This is a prime example of how education is not equal as shown by effects on the students attending the lower-income schools.

The second solution I am proposing would be to give all qualified people the same chance in the workplace no matter what race they are. Also with equal chances in the workplace, salaries based on qualification would also be equal. Racism is constantly making life harder on the minorities living in the United States. Statistics show that white people do make more money than the minorities. A. Greenblatt, the author of an article titled "Race in America," focused on several interesting statistics. For example, "the average White worker made \$126 a week more than the average Black worker in 2002, and \$201 a week more than the average Hispanic." The difference between \$126 or \$201 may not seem like that much a week but over time that can add up to a lot each year. If equal opportunities were given to all, then salaries would be more equal and then racism could be greatly reduced in the workplace and on its way to being reduced all

over the world.

The last solution that I am offering is to make sure the government is properly funding the lower-income schools so that they are given the same opportunities as schools that are wealthier due to higher income in the community. Marcia Clemmitt, author of “Fixing Urban Schools, Has No Child Left Behind Helped Minority Students?” says that only about 50% of African American students graduate from high school. This is a shocking statistic and clearly some type of action needs to be taken to improve this number. Marcia Clemmitt also noted that schools that are mainly white middle-class have a 1 in 4 chance of achieving good test scores while a school with mostly low-income minority students has around a 1 in 300 chance. Could this statistic be due to the effects of improperly funded schools in the inner-city? This statistic is outrageous and definitely should paint a picture for readers that there is a problem with racism in education institutions and how the government should be responsible for proper funding.

In conclusion, racism is clearly a problem in many aspects of the world today; however, one of the greatest problems with racism is within education. I have given three socially acceptable solutions to reduce the severity and spread of racism. Understandingly, reforming education could be a fairly long process, but if less fortunate students in school today were to be given the same opportunities as the middle-class to upper-class students, then within just a generation education quality could be improved. Although improving education is just a start to reducing racism, it could be a major step in creating equal opportunities for all.

To the Editor:

Here is an opinion piece that I hope that you will publish. I am submitting it through e-mail so that you don't have to retype it. To verify that I have indeed written this opinion piece, you may call me at (789) 123-1234 during working hours.

Late-Term Abortion: What Are We Fighting For?

By Casey O'Brien (1,005 words)

Bombings, assassinations, protests and rallies. What's the subject that has everyone up in arms? An unpopular presidency perhaps? Government upheaval? World War Three? No, no, all of the drastic public displays of angst mentioned above stem from the topic of abortion. As recounted in "The Last Abortionist," an article written for "Esquire" by John H. Richardson, Doctor Warren Hern of Wichita, Kansas is the last late-term abortionist in America, and he has suffered through eight of his colleagues' assassinations while he himself has lived under immense criticism and threatening violence for the past twenty-five years. Dr. Hern experienced the death of his sole remaining colleague, Dr. George Tiller, on May 31, 2009. Tiller was shot in the head while passing out church leaflets. This lifestyle of being subjected to constant criticism and threats is not uncommon to doctors who perform abortions. So what is all the drama about? Let's take a look at the widely debated topic of late-term abortion.

Late-term abortion is the abortion of a pregnancy that is in the last stage of development, the third trimester. One of the main distinctions between a fetus that is in the early stages of development and one that is in the third trimester, is its ability to feel pain. Some Pro-Life advocates incorrectly argue that all forms of abortion are unethical and inhumane because the

unborn fetuses feel pain during the abortion process. However, as noted in “The Abortion Dilemma,” written by Pro-Choice activist Miriam Claire, before twenty-eight weeks of gestation the synaptic connections in the brain are not yet developed, and fetal movements are simply reflexes that do not indicate pain or thought. Claire supports her point with the analogy that “single cells also move, but that doesn’t mean that they think and feel pain.” So therefore abortion before the eighth month of pregnancy should not be regarded as inhumane because it does not cast cruel pain or suffering upon the unborn fetus.

After twenty-eight weeks of gestation, as a woman’s pregnancy is in the its third trimester, synaptic connections in the brain develop and the potential does arise for the fetus to experience pain during the abortion process. But is the possibility of inflicted pain enough to deem late-term abortions unethical and inhumane? Should we allow first- and second-trimester abortions, but ban third-trimester ones? I agree with Pro-Life advocates’ belief that unborn fetuses should not be subjected to pain or torture; however, what if a late-term abortion is necessary to protect the health of the woman pregnant with the fetus? Fetal abnormalities that develop during the third trimester can cause severe health risks for the woman carrying the fetus, and abortion is sometimes the safest option for the pregnant woman.

Instances in which late-term abortion would not be acceptable would be those cases in which a woman wants to have an abortion during the third trimester simply because she did not get around to having one during the first and second trimesters. Laziness and procrastination on the part of the pregnant woman should not be an acceptable reason for late-term abortion. As described in the “Esquire” article I mentioned earlier, Dr. Warren Hern performs third-trimester abortions only on women who have experienced extreme pregnancy complications and must

have an abortion to protect their own health. He takes on cases only of legitimate necessity and has turned down women he has found unsuitable for the procedure. In "The Last Abortionist" article, Dr. Hern describes why he refused to treat a woman: "She was raped. I'm sympathetic, but I can't risk my medical license for someone who just didn't get around to doing anything about it." Doctor Warren Hern is very strict with his policy to not perform abortions on women who want to have late-term abortions because of their own procrastination.

Instances in which late-term abortion is acceptable are those cases in which a pregnancy complication or severe fetal abnormality is not discovered until the third trimester, and an abortion is necessary to protect the health of the pregnant woman. The "Esquire" article also tells the story of a woman who already had a young son, and after finding out she had a severe pregnancy complication with her second child, was afraid she wouldn't survive to raise him. Dr. Hern was the only person able to perform her particular abortion, and he saved her life. After the woman's procedure, she spoke of Dr. Hern: "Now I'm still recovering, and still sad and still mourning, and I realize how grateful I am that Dr Hern was able to take me under such quick and terrible circumstances. That's what gets me so upset. He's a doctor who is trying to help people. It's shocking that people want to hurt him."

So in the case of Dr. Warren Hern, he is a doctor who performs late-term abortions only when it is imperative to the mother's health, and helps to save the lives of women afflicted by dangerous fetal abnormalities, yet he is still terrorized by Pro-Life, anti-abortion groups. He, and many other doctors who perform abortions, live in fear for their own safety. This aggression and violence towards Pro-Choice supporters limits the number of abortion services available to women, and affects their ability to access services in the event of a legitimate pregnancy

emergency that requires late-term abortion.

I hope that you, as the reader, absorb the information in this piece with an open mind, and see the value of a Pro-Choice mentality. Being open to the idea of abortion, especially in cases of third-trimester emergency, does not make you a bad person or one who is not compassionate, as Pro-Life advocates like to project. Instead, it makes you more compassionate, because you are able to put yourself in the shoes of others and see that abortion is a reasonable, and sometimes necessary, alternative to motherhood that needs to be supported rather than attacked.