

English 79:
Preparatory English
Mastery Essay Information
Packet

Fall 2006

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English 79 Mastery Essay Information

Composition Level II

Fall 2006

The essay by Ruben Navarrette, Jr., titled "Can You Make It Past My Last Name?" originally appeared on the website CNN.com and will be the basis of the topic for the fall 2006 Mastery Essay (see pages three, four, and five). Before coming to write your Mastery Essay, you may read, annotate, and discuss Navarrette's essay by yourself, with others, and in your English class. Your teacher may want to include other readings or materials on a similar topic to discuss as well. You are strongly encouraged to bring your annotated essay with you on the date you write your Mastery Essay. This will be solely your responsibility, not the responsibility of your teacher.

The actual questions to be used on the Mastery Essay will not be announced before the writing day. On the day of the Mastery Essay, you will be given two questions from which to choose. You will not be expected to summarize the essay or to extract text from the essay, but being able to do this may help you to answer the essay question more thoroughly.

The **Directions** for your Mastery Essay will look something like this: On the line in the upper right hand corner, insert the three course code digits that your instructor gives you. If English is your second language, check the line marked ESL. Put your Delta student identification number on the face page and the upper right hand corners of each lined page. In the space provided, put the number of the question that you have chosen to answer (either #1 or #2).

You will have eighty minutes in which to plan, write, and proofread an essay in response to the following topic. Take some time to make a plan of what you want to say before you start writing. Leave some time at the end of the period to proofread. Your essay should introduce the subject and answer the question with specifics and examples.

You may cross out and add information as necessary. Although what you say is more important than how much you say, you will want to write a complete essay rather than a few short paragraphs. Use ink, and write as legibly as possible.

Following these directions will be two essay prompts from which to choose.

Commentary: Can you make it past my last name?

By Ruben Navarrette Jr.

Special to CNN

Thursday, August 24, 2006; Posted: 6:29 p.m. EDT (22:29 GMT)

SAN DIEGO, California (CNN) -- Some longtime readers insist they have detected a leftward drift whenever I write about illegal immigration. They're wrong.

But I can see how they might get that impression in a political climate that is increasingly all or nothing, with little room for nuance.

In a nation divided into red and blue states, there's no room for those of us who crave more colors. In the immigration debate, I've tried to do three things:

One is to deplore the degree to which the debate is driven by the dark impulse of racism. What concerns many Americans about illegal immigration is the sense that it speeds up the Latinization of the United States -- where Anglo-Saxon culture is replaced by Latin culture, where English gives way to Spanish, and where we Americans become strangers in our own land.

Two, I highlight the hypocrisy of Americans complaining about illegal immigrants while enjoying the cheap labor. It's as if there are two contradictory signs on the U.S.-Mexico border, "Keep Out" and "Help Wanted." President Bush was right that there are jobs that Americans won't do, and Americans gladly offer those jobs to the same illegal immigrants they supposedly want to expel.

The third is to point out flaws with so-called solutions to curb illegal immigration. From denying U.S. citizenship to the U.S.-born children of illegal immigrants; to making local police officers enforce federal immigration law; to approving Hazelton, Pennsylvania-type bans on renting to illegal immigrants -- many of these ideas are examples of the cure being worse than the disease.

I'm just trying to keep folks honest. But I also have to be honest with myself. It wasn't so long ago that another batch of readers insisted I was too conservative.

I've lectured groups of Hispanic immigrants about the importance of coming to the United States legally, learning English, assimilating into American culture, becoming U.S. citizens, and engaging in political and civic life.

Like many U.S.-born Hispanics, I support stronger border enforcement in the form of more border patrol agents and harsher penalties for employers of illegal immigrants.

According to the 2006 National Survey of Latinos, conducted recently by the Pew Hispanic Center, 53 percent of native-born Hispanics support increasing the number of border patrol agents. Just 41 percent oppose it.

I also oppose a blanket, unearned amnesty where illegal immigrants are given legal status without lifting a finger. Government shouldn't do for individuals, en masse, what they should do for themselves -- in this case, take steps to become legal.

Judging from the more than 500 e-mails I receive each week in response to my columns, some readers will be shocked to hear me say this. In fact, judging from their comments, it's clear that many never make it past my Spanish surname.

Once they realize that I'm Hispanic, they unfairly leap to the conclusion that I support open borders and condone illegal immigration so that -- as one reader put it -- I can bring in "more of (my) relatives." Another reader said it was obvious that "you support the Mexican invasion because you're Mexican."

Speaking of racism ...

Ruben Navarrette is an editorial board member of The San Diego Union-Tribune and a nationally syndicated columnist.

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Ruben Navarrette, Jr., is a nationally syndicated columnist with the Washington Post Writers Group. His twice-weekly column appears in more than 175 newspapers. The second-generation Mexican-American is one of fewer than 10 Latino syndicated columnists in the United States, and one of the country's youngest syndicated columnists overall.

Navarrette is a native of California's San Joaquin Valley. He holds two degrees from Harvard. His first book was *A Darker Side of Crimson: Odyssey of a Harvard Chicano*, published by Bantam Books in 1993.

Scoring and Evaluation

Scoring

Two English 79 Instructors other than your own will read your essay and assign it a score between one and five; scores of three and above are passing (see "English 79 Scoring Guide"). If the two instructors disagree about whether your essay should pass, a third instructor will read your essay and decide whether it passes or fails.

The instructors will be paying special attention to the following:

1. Thesis responding accurately to the assigned task
2. Adequate and organized development of the subject
3. Sufficient specific information to illustrate and/or support the thesis
4. Adequate use of language
5. Correctness in punctuation, spelling, and grammar

Dictionaries will be allowed.

Evaluation

Because English 79 is a competency-based course, the course grade will reflect not only the work a student has completed throughout the semester but also the skill level the student has achieved by the end of the semester. Your teacher will determine the final course grade on the basis of the quality of the coursework and the final examination (worth 60%) and the Mastery Essay (worth 40% "pass" or 40% "fail").

Answering Essay Questions and Taking Essay Examinations

Essay examinations are one of the practical but demanding applications of the basic principles of good composition under a rigid time limit. Additionally, essay questions test your thinking and writing ability, including your knowledge of Standard Written English.

Answering Essay Questions

1. Read through the examination questions carefully and thoughtfully before doing any writing. Try to decide exactly what the questions call for and what they do not call for. Choose the question which is easier for you to write about or the question for which you will have the most to say. Don't spend too much time deciding upon which question to answer.

2. Organize and plan your answer before writing. In a timed writing assignment, you will probably not have time to write several drafts or even two drafts. Therefore, it is important that you decide upon the important ideas you think should be covered before you begin to write. Jot down details for yourself if this helps. Writing down your thesis and your topic sentences is a good way to make a brief organizational plan for your essay.

3. Write in specific, concrete, and precise terms. Essay questions are usually phrased in fairly general terms, but you want to answer the question with examples, specifics, and details. Be sure each body paragraph is thoroughly developed.

4. Proofread your essay carefully before handing it in. Make sure you have answered the question thoroughly. Finally, check punctuation and spelling. Make sure you haven't left out any important words.

5. If you extract a quote from the professional essay from which the prompt has been drawn, be sure that you put quotes around any material that you extract verbatim. Also, be sure to refer to the author of the essay and the essay title. You must give credit where credit is due. Doing otherwise is known as plagiarism.

The following is a list of words that may appear in the prompt for the Mastery Essay:

Analyze

Separate the main ideas in order to examine them in detail.

Compare

Look for qualities or characteristics that resemble each other. Emphasize similarities.

Contrast

Stress the dissimilarities, differences, or unlikeness of things.

Define

Give concise, clear, and authoritative meanings. Don't give details, but make sure to give the limits of the definition.

Describe

Recount, characterize, sketch, or relate in sequence or story form.

Discuss

Examine, analyze carefully, and give reasons and details.

Evaluate

Carefully appraise the problem, citing both advantages and limitations.

Explain or Show How

Clarify and interpret the material you present. Give specific reasons.

Identify

Briefly state dates, people, places or events which set this fact or figure apart or make it outstanding.

Illustrate

Use one or more concrete examples to explain.

Interpret

Translate, give examples of, or comment on, a subject, giving your judgment about it.

Justify

Prove or give reasons for decisions or conclusions, trying to be convincing.

Relate

Show how things are related to or connected with each other or how one causes another, correlates with another, or is like another.

Review

Examine a subject critically, analyzing and commenting on the important statements to be made about it.

State

Present the main point in a brief, clear sequence, usually omitting details.

Summarize

Give the main points in condensed form, like the summary of a chapter.

English 79 Scoring Guide

5

A 5 essay *clearly demonstrates competence* in writing in both form and content, although it may have occasional errors. A 5 essay

- effectively addresses the writing task;
- is well-organized;
- develops the thesis with details and examples;
- displays competence with English grammar;
- demonstrates sentence variety.

4

A 4 essay *demonstrates competence* in writing in both form and content, though it will have occasional errors. A 4 essay

- may address some parts of the writing task more effectively than others;
- is generally well-organized, though it may be more formulaic than a 5 essay;
- develops the thesis with a sufficient number of details and/or examples;
- displays competence with English grammar, although errors will occur;
- demonstrates some sentence variety.

3

A 3 essay shows *beginning competence in writing in both form and content*. A 3 essay

- addresses the writing task but may address it in a partial or incomplete way;
- is adequately organized (and may not contain five paragraphs);
- uses some details and/or examples to support the thesis;
- demonstrates adequate but inconsistent or undistinguished facility with grammar and syntax.

2

A 2 essay *contains problems in either form or content*, although it may demonstrate some competence. A 2 essay

- responds inadequately to the writing task;
- it may fail to organize ideas in a logical way;
- it may fail to support the thesis with specific examples;
- it may accumulate errors in grammar and/or syntax to a distracting degree.

1

A 1 essay *contains problems in either form or content or in both form and content*. A 1 essay

- fails to respond to the writing task;
- it may show no control of organization;
- it may fail to develop the thesis with specific details or examples;
- it may demonstrate serious and persistent errors with grammar and syntax.

Options for English 79 Students

English 79 students who fail the Mastery Essay have several options for achieving Level III. They are:

1. Repeating English 79. Students who earn a "D" or "F" in a course may repeat that course. The new grade will replace the old grade in the students' overall GPA, but the old grade will remain on the students' transcript. (Note: Students' financial aid packages may be affected by their choosing to repeat a course in which they have previously earned a "D" or "F.")
2. Retake: challenging Level II. Students who do not earn a "C" or better in English 79 may challenge Level II by going to the Assessment Center, Goleman 122, and requesting a Level II Composition Retake. This does not alter the students' standing or change the grade in their English 79 class, but, should they pass the retake they become eligible to enroll English 1A.
3. Filing a portfolio. **With the instructor's endorsement only**, a student may file a portfolio in lieu of a passing score on the Mastery Essay. See the portfolio guidelines for information on this process.

Many times, we, as English teachers, recommend that a student get more practice in writing before attempting to take English 79 again. The following classes are recommended before retaking English 79 if you need more help with your writing.

English 73AB, the writing lab course. Students may choose to practice writing in the lab setting and then attempt to challenge through the Assessment Office. The writing lab course's advantage is that it allows students to work one-on-one with instructors.

Reading 92: Reading and Writing for Personal Growth and Career Success. This is a level I course; however, it is an excellent choice for gaining more practice in reading and writing.

Note: Students **must** earn a "C" or better in English 79 in order to meet the composition requirements for the AA or AS degree.

English 79 Mastery Essay: Portfolio Criteria

Function

The portfolio process gives individual instructors the opportunity to endorse the work of students who deserve a second assessment of their writing skills. These are usually students who have done well in class and have had excellent attendance, although they failed the Mastery. The portfolio process should be made available only to those students who meet the criteria below. It is **not** intended to be an alternative vehicle for the placement of borderline students. *Students cannot submit portfolios without their instructor's endorsement; it is entirely the instructor's decision whether or not to file an individual portfolio.*

Format

1. The portfolio must include a minimum of three complete essays written prior to the Mastery Essay. The student's failing Mastery Essay must be included as well.
2. The essays should demonstrate mastery of analytical and/or expository prose. They should not be purely descriptive or narrative.
3. Two of the essays must be demand in-class writing samples; one of them should be representative of the student's out-of-class work, accompanied by rough drafts if possible.
4. Each essay must demonstrate minimum competence in writing as delineated on the "English 79 Scoring Guide" by a score of 3.
5. The student must write a brief letter (two or three paragraphs) to the Portfolio Committee telling why his or her portfolio is deserving of a passing score. This letter should be written in class.

Portfolio submissions should be clearly identified by: Instructor Name and Course Code Number, Student Name and Student Identification Number.

Assignment descriptions or handouts should accompany each paper submitted in the portfolio.

Portfolios must be submitted to the English 79 Administrator one week from the Reading Day.

Sequence of English Composition Courses at Delta College

Placement in English composition courses is determined by appropriate test scores or course prerequisites.

Level I

English 70
English 85 (ESL)
English 87

Level II

English 79

Level III

English 1A

Level I Writing Programs

English 70 and English 85 (ESL)

English 87

English 70 and 85 are parallel basic writing courses, designed to build reading comprehension as a context for writing in personal, college, and work settings. Each student compiles a portfolio to display examples of her/his writing, including a summary of a short article; a short essay with revision; a letter for the real world; and an in-class timed writing responding to a selection from *The Final Draft* student magazine.

Working in collaboration, English 70 and English 85 faculty evaluate student portfolios to gauge readiness for English 87 or English 79. Students may earn CREDIT grades with recommendation to English 79 or to English 87.

English 87 is an intermediate writing course, specifically designed to prepare basic writers for English 79. Each student practices writing short essays, demonstrating growth of organization and development skills, in addition to strengthening sentence level skills.

The English 79 Program

Level II

Program History

English 79 is a pivotal composition course in the sequence of writing classes at Delta College. In 1986, Delta College recognized that many of its "college-level" students enrolling in English 1A, the freshman composition transfer course, were in fact not prepared to achieve success with college-level writing tasks. As a result of this recognition, the English faculty designed English 79, a preparatory composition class whose instruction bridged the gap between level 1 writing courses (English 70, 85, and 87) and full-blown essay courses (English 1A and English 1B). Eventually, English 79 became the designated AA degree composition class, a designation which made the course serve two essential purposes: it ensures written literacy skills for AA and certificate candidates, and it enables students who matriculate with pre-college skills to develop the skills necessary to successfully complete college writing tasks. Between 500 and 800 students complete English 79 each semester, giving it one of the largest enrollments of any English program on the campus.

Program Philosophy

There is a remarkable consensus among English 79 instructors about the purpose and success of the course. Designed as a developmental course, English 79 is premised on the notion that students from widely varying backgrounds with a diverse range of literacy skills can master a basic essay format and the rules of Standard Written English. Most instructors in the English 79 program structure their courses on the revision model, including prewriting, rough draft review, editing, and final reading days. The curriculum includes instruction in the grammar, syntax, and punctuation rules of Standard Written English; repeated practice with the writing process; the reading and analysis of model essays; and drills with demand writing skills.

The English 79 Mastery Essay

During the sixteenth week of the semester, all students enrolled in this course undertake a mastery essay that determines whether or not they advance to Level III and become eligible for English 1A. This essay is expository in nature, and students are asked to compose an essay on a topic generated from an essay they have read beforehand. Students write the mastery essay during an eighty-minute class period. The essays are marked with class code and social security number, and the English 79 faculty holistically score them one week after the administration. The scoring process is a blind one, with discrepancies (pass/fail disagreements in the awarded scores) resolved by an experienced third reader. Students must pass the mastery essay in order to be eligible for English 1A, and the score on the mastery essay also contributes to 40% of their course grade.

The English 1A Program

Level III

Program History

English 1A is a college-level composition class that is a requirement for graduation from all four-year degree programs in the UC and CSU systems. Students who score Level III on the assessment-placement test at Delta are eligible to take English 1A, although they may take a lower level composition class if they wish. The course presupposes that students have mastered the basic rules of Standard Written English as they apply to syntax, grammar, and punctuation and are ready to experiment with style and structure in order to fulfill a particular purpose and/or accommodate a specific audience.

Program Philosophy

Instructors in the English Department are in agreement as to the writing standards that English 1A students must meet, but they may choose to present the material in different modes. Some instructors prefer to teach to the rhetorical pattern of the essay; others prefer material that is thematically linked, and yet others may combine the two methods. Most instructors use some form of the revision model that emphasizes prewriting, writing, revision, and peer reaction. Textbooks for the course range from those that focus solely on the essay format to those that include poetry and short story selections thematically related to the essays. Close reading of the literature for an understanding of structure, tone, and authorial purpose as well as for content is an integral part of the course.

The English 1A Mastery Essay

The English 1A Mastery Essay is administered at the end of the semester. Similar to the English 79 Mastery Essay, the 1A Mastery Essay requires that a student adopt an argumentative stance on an issue or problem. Students are presented with a quotation that they must summarize and analyze. They have fifty minutes in which to formulate a thesis and support it. Not all instructors require their students to write the Mastery Essay, but those who do then participate in the holistic reading of the essays. Some instructors choose to use the essay as an ungraded assignment for which the student earns participation points; others assign it as a graded essay; still others use it as an indicator to the student of his relative success on a demand writing assignment. Since virtually all colleges and universities require that matriculating students produce an entrance writing sample of a similar nature, many instructors feel that the Mastery Essay provides the student with valuable practice. To prepare the student for the Mastery Essay, many instructors have time writing exercises built into their curricula.

Five Sample Passing Essays

The following five passing student essays (pages 22 - 23), which follow Cassandra J. Eastham's essay "Forgotten Children," were written in response to the Mastery Prompt on page 21. The writers had read and discussed Eastham's essay before they wrote their Mastery Essay. However, they had not seen the topic beforehand, and they had only 80 minutes to write their essay in class. The sample essays have been word-processed; however, nothing else has been changed.

Sample essay #1 was written in response to topic #2 on page 21. Sample essays #2, 3, 4, and 5 were written in response to topic #1 on page 21.

Refer back to page 6 of this packet to see what the readers will be looking for in a passing essay. If you were a reader, what score would you give each of these essays? Why? Read these essays and discuss the scores with your teacher. Remember that all of these essays passed and that each of these essays received a score of 3 or above. The 79 Scoring Criteria for passing essays is listed below.

5

A 5 essay *clearly demonstrates competence* in writing in both form and content, although it may have occasional errors. A 5 essay

- effectively addresses the writing task;
- is well-organized;
- develops the thesis with details and examples;
- displays competence with English grammar;
- demonstrates sentence variety.

4

A 4 essay *demonstrates competence* in writing in both form and content, though it will have occasional errors. A 4 essay

- may address some parts of the writing task more effectively than others;
- is generally well-organized, though it may be more formulaic than a 5 essay;
- develops the thesis with a sufficient number of details and/or examples;
- displays competence with English grammar, although errors will occur;
- demonstrates some sentence variety.

3

A 3 essay shows *beginning competence in writing in both form and content*. A 3 essay

- addresses the writing task but may address it in a partial or incomplete way;
- is adequately organized (and may not contain five paragraphs);
- uses some details and/or examples to support the thesis;

--demonstrates adequate but inconsistent or undistinguished facility with grammar and syntax.

Delta Winds: A Magazine of Student Essays,
A Publication of San Joaquin Delta College, 2004

Forgotten Children

Cassandra J. Eastham

We pay before we pump the gas, we work before we receive the paycheck, and we must pass the exam before we get the grade. It's legal and it's fair. It's unfortunate that people are not required to raise a child *before* they are awarded an orgasm. A moment of romance results in a life-long responsibility. Some planned on it, and some tried to do the "right thing," but when the romance ends, when the marriage is over, when the reality of responsibility becomes unbearable, it is too easy to leave those responsibilities, those children, to somebody else.

I suffered from serial monogamous relationships for ten years, and, as a result, I have two very different child support cases that I struggle with every day. The primary reason I kicked these men out of my home was that it was easier to raise and support my children without them. Each had decided he could not handle the stress of supporting a household, so he just stopped. I spent years trying to talk to, convince, coerce, assist, con, plea, support, get on my knees and beg each man to stop neglecting the child, to get a job, and to stop spending money on computer games and pornography. There was nothing I could do to get their help while they were still in my home, and I was naïve enough to think the laws would help me retrieve financial assistance from both fathers once they were gone.

My sons and I have dipped under the poverty line more than once. We have frequently gone without daycare, dental work, clothing, food and a place to live. It turns out that my situation is not unique. "Child support payments, which are intended to provide economic resources and security to youngsters, are often made irregularly, partially, or in many instances not at all" (Kalter 10). Why? "Married couples brought in \$28,168 a year more than single mothers. Even single women managed to collect \$7,494 a year more than single mothers" (Watnik 339). *Why?* "Despite efforts to increase awards, the average amount received is less than half of what it costs to actually raise a child" (Watnik 333). **Why?** "Seventy-five percent of women on AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children, also known as welfare) [are receiving] public services because the absent parent of their children is unable or refuses to pay child support" (Spence 153). Why? Is it the laws or is it the fathers?

The laws, at least in California, seem to be in place. The California Family Code Section 4053 states that,

In implementing the statewide uniform [child support] guideline, the courts shall adhere to the following principles:

- (a) A parent's first and principal obligation is to support his or her minor children according to the parent's circumstances and station in life.
- (b) Both parents are mutually responsible for the support of their children.
- (c) The guideline takes into account each parent's actual income and level of responsibility for the children.
- (d) Each parent should pay for the support of the children according to his or her ability.
- (e) The guideline seeks to place the interests of children as the state's top priority.

The process to collect child support also seems to be very simple. One must first locate the other parent, establish paternity if the other parent is male, establish a support order and then have that support order enforced.

Locating the other parent can be difficult if the custodial parent has no legal data on him such as social security number, driver's license number or place of birth, but locating the other parent can be simple if the custodial parent is still in touch with him. Still, in order to enforce the support, the government needs to know more than simply where the parent is. It is customary to fill out more detailed information on a case file, such as the parent's place of business, the license plate and model of the car he drives, any assets or real estate the parent owns, names and locations of the grandparents and so forth. The more information collected at this point, the smoother the process will be.

Next, legal paternity must be established if the non-custodial parent is the father. If the father is present at the child's birth, hospitals establish paternity while issuing the birth certificate. If the parents are married, it is assumed the husband is the father unless legally contested and proven otherwise.

Once the other parent is located and is legally recognized as the child's parent, a child support order must be awarded. If the child is a product of the marriage, child support orders are often established at the time of the divorce. Historically, the amount was determined by an agreement between the parents before the divorce was filed in court through a Marriage Settlement Agreement. Forcing two people who are already at odds with each other to cooperatively discuss money matters is like pouring gasoline onto a fire. Luckily, the laws in California have changed, and the amount of child support is now calculated by the courts. The three key factors in deciding the amount are income of both parents, percent of visitation of both parents, and price of childcare.

The last step, enforcing the support, is not something the custodial parents can do themselves. They must rely on the District Attorney's Family Support Division to enforce a support order for them; however, the real responsibility of expediting a court order lies on the shoulders of the custodial parent (Watnik 310). Raising a child is not easy with two parents involved; but raising a child alone requires a superhero effort. That single parent now has to be the mom and the dad, the disciplinarian and

the nurturer, the teacher and the playmate, the taxi driver, the housekeeper, the cook, and the breadwinner. Society does not generally call single parents superheroes because it plainly cannot be done. On top of all that, these single parents are forced to tack on the duties of legal secretaries in order to get the help they desperately need.

However grave the problem may be now, the history of child support has not been without its occasional legal adjustment. The federal and state governments have gone through great pains to support the needs of single parent families. "Despite custody orders, collection of child support long relied heavily on voluntary cooperation and was rarely enforced. . . . It took many years of seeing women and children intolerably impoverished before people realized that a system of child support would not work without serious enforcement measures" (Wallerstein 251). The AFDC was established during the Great Depression to help single parents who were not receiving support. A Head of Household status has been added for filing taxes. In 1996, Congress passed the Personal Responsibility Act for tracking down and enforcing payment from fathers (Mink 69).

Orders can be enforced by wage withholding, wage garnishment, writ of garnishment for personal property, a creditor's bill if assets have been signed away to a third party, and even a till tap in which authorities can empty the cash register of a business the parent owns. Orders can also be enforced through a diversion of government benefits: child support can be deducted from unemployment compensation, worker's compensation, pension, retirement fund, trust, social security, disability and tax refund. Up to 55% of the obligor's wages can be withheld in all states (Watnik 311). A non-custodial parent failing to produce a good reason for failing to pay past due child support is now charged with civil contempt of court. "Criminal prosecution for non support means the paying parent is accused of criminally neglecting the child by failing to pay support" (Watnik 313). Delinquency of over \$1000 is, by law, reported to the Credit Bureau, and a bankruptcy does not absolve the non-custodial parent of past due amounts. Driver's licenses, business licenses and even fishing licenses can be revoked. "The judge can order extra child support payments to make up the difference, require that a bond be posted, or even send the parent to jail until back payments are made" (Watnik 313). Furthermore, there is no statute of limitations for back-owed child support. Whatever monies were not paid to the child before the child turned 18 will continue to be owed to the child after age 18, after the child is adopted, married, and to the next of kin when the child dies.

In short, authorities have tried to write child support laws to carry the same weight of responsibility as actually raising children: you cannot get rid of them, it is very bad if you fail, and the duty does not expire. Why, then, "when the Census Bureau surveyed child support collections, they found that only 51% of the parents received full payments, 24% received partial payments, and 25% received no payments at all" (Watnik 303)? Why don't parents want to support their children? There are a lot of miserable excuses, but the top 5 reasons why parents don't pay child support fall into the following categories. The non-custodial parent:

- wants to "get even" because visitation is frustrated or denied
- believes that the other parent should be the sole supporter of the children
- wants the other parent to get a job

- is convinced the children don't need the money
- doesn't like to be ordered to do anything (Watnik 313)

Despite the laws, fathers have sidestepped child support because the sense of responsibility is just not there. Perhaps the laws should be even tougher. Welfare mothers are sometimes given court ordered birth control. Why is it that fathers who deliberately fail to pay support for their children are not?

Every time I balance my checkbook, I thank the powers that be that I miscarried the pregnancy in the marriage that occurred between leaving Frank and meeting Jim. It is as bitterly ironic as it sounds.

Looking back, I can only say that, if I had known they would fail in their responsibilities, I would not have tangoed with them in the first place. I have already cut a lot of fat from my financial worries. No one is spending my paycheck behind my back. No one is beating or neglecting the boys while I am at work. There are no mysterious purchases showing up at my door and no 1-976-HOT-SEXX numbers showing up on my phone bill. I feel a great deal of security just knowing that my children are actually receiving every resource I can provide.

I am very and most permanently single. From this position, it is easy to want to hate all men, but I cannot, for I am raising two boys to become men. It is easy to want to blame laws, society, bureaucracy or the fathers themselves for the lack of support, but trying to force people to accept the virtue of responsibility would take far more than laws and consequences. It would take a bunch of big miracles. I will continue to wiggle my way through the red tape, and the fathers may pay up eventually, but I can no longer hold my breath.

Fighting to squeeze blood from an unyielding stone requires a lot more energy, time, money, and patience than any single parent has to offer. Instead of spending these precious resources on making my exes pay, I feel they are better spent on raising the children my exes forgot.

Perhaps *that* is why.

Works Cited

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Sample Mastery Exam Topic

Choose one. *Circle the number of the topic you have chosen to write about.*

Essay Topic #1

We all know there are fathers who take responsibility for their children even after they've left the mothers of their children or even after the mothers of their children have left them. Some fathers gain full custody, others gain joint custody, and many others take responsibility for their children by paying child support only or paying child support and keeping in contact, in various ways, with the children whom they have fathered.

However, as Cassandra Eastham points out, about half of all fathers abandon their children, leaving the mother solely responsible. In her essay "Forgotten Children" Eastham gives several reasons for the fathers' behavior.

In a complete essay, using reasons and examples to support your stand, tell why you think so many fathers fail to take responsibility for their children after they've left the mothers of their children or after the mothers of their children have left them.

Essay Topic #2

There is a saying that "Every child should be a wanted child." However, every year thousands of children are born who are not wanted. Failure of birth control methods accounts for some of these births. However, failure to use any form of birth control also accounts for many of these births.

In a complete essay, using reasons and examples to support your stand, discuss why so many couples choose not to use birth control when neither partner wants a child.

Sample Essay #1

Mastery Essay

By Douglas Ross

In Society today, we are faced with the great problem of thousands of children who are born who are not wanted. This is a problem that has existed for ages, and is ever increasing today. The cause of this escalating problem is of course irresponsibility. Although we may be able to make our own choices, we cannot choose the consequences that follow. This mentality is unfortunately not practiced among teens, taught by parents at home, or sold in the media today.

I am a product of public schools. In such an environment I have heard a variety of opinions regarding the matter of birth control. From my own personal observations, I have discovered that many young couples who are obviously unable to raise a child refuse to use birth control because they believe that a pregnancy could never happen to them. As a sophomore, I attended a Law Enforcement class. In this class we read many disturbing stories of teen moms who in the end, turned to prostitutions to make enough money to support their child. In such situations the mother's reputation was ruined, and the baby was raised in a questionable environment. After making various friends I the class, I realized that many of the young ladies were sexually active. What disturbed me the most was that many

simply chose not to use birth control. In many cases, even after being exposed to what could happen if a pregnancy occurred, many of these young ladies refused to accept that this could happen to them.

Another reason why many couples choose not to use birth control when neither partner wants a child is because they were raised irresponsibly. Today, many children are raised by parents who create a consequence free environment. Many parents don't see the need to damage their children's level of self-esteem by punishing them for bad behavior. As a result, the child grows up in a consequence free environment. This unfortunately leads to much irresponsibility on the child's part later in life. Many teens suffer from this mentality. This is shown by the number of children being born to couples who aren't ready to take on the responsibility of raising a child. One may ask then, why were they sleeping together without protection? The response in many cases is that many can't see far enough ahead to realize that there are consequences to every action that we make. This as I have brought up before, is a direct result of wrong upbringing.

In addition to this lack of responsible parents who teach their children such principles, we live in a society that sells instant gratification. Looking at the propaganda of today, I am constantly bombarded with advertisements that give the impression that I should live for the moment. However, beneficial such a slogan may be to their product, advertisers fail to realize what type of environment this way of thinking creates. Practicing such a lifestyle is simple irresponsible, and will lead to many decisions being made without carefully weighing out the "Pro's and con's." Classic examples of such irresponsibility are pregnancies that occur with couples who are not prepared to raise a child. If a more responsible mentality were instilled, more responsible consequences would be the outcome. Such advertising in my opinion is hurting society, and only adds to the issue of couples refusing to use

birth control, when they are clearly not willing to deal with the consequences that await such practice.

In conclusion, there are many factors which contribute to the number of children born who are not wanted. To solve such a problem, society must change its view of what is and isn't acceptable to promote today. I believe that through more responsible parenting and more responsible advertising, we can create a more responsible environment. Within such an environment, mature and responsible choices will prevail.

Sample Essay #2

Mastery Essay

By Crystal Palomino

Having a child requires a lot of responsibility. If you are not ready to have a child, you weren't ready to have sex. Fathers, more than mothers, abandon their children everyday. Is that fair to the mother and the child? The father says that he is not ready to take up a responsibility like that, and that he's not ready to become a father. What if the mom wasn't ready? Whether she is or not it doesn't matter. The mother has to go through with being responsible for a child even if she is not ready. I think that fathers fail to take responsibility for their children because they feel that they aren't ready to handle a child; they feel that they shouldn't have to pay child support because the kid can do just fine with the wages the mother is making, and also because fathers act like they're too much of a man to have to take care of their children.

Like I said earlier, if you are not ready to have a child, you were not ready to have sex. Everyone has got to think about all the consequences before they act upon something. Men do not think when they have sex. Women might not either, but they do more than men. Men are only in it for the pleasure. When the pleasure is

over they are out the door like an animal. Nine months later comes a baby, but no father. Why? I'll tell you why. It is because the father of the child wasn't expecting for the woman to get pregnant. When he finds out that she had a baby her runs away. I can understand why a father would run away, but it is not fair to both the mother and the child. The father wasn't ready to have a child. He doesn't know what to do with a baby; he sure did know what to do with his penis though.

This happened to one of my closest friends. She got pregnant by some guy, and once he found out she was pregnant he left the town. A father not living up to their responsibilities just because they feel they aren't ready is so pathetic.

Some fathers feel that they shouldn't have to pay child support. I say that all fathers who aren't with the mother should have to pay child support. That is the most fair thing to do. Not only is it fair, it helps the mother out. Taking care of a child is expensive. One person can do it, but is very hard. With the help of the missing parent it makes both the child and the mother's life easier. A friend of mine has two children with this immature guy. She has suffered so much because of him. When the first child came he was still by her side, but after the second one he was gone with the wind. I see it as my friend being at fault too, but things could have been so much better for all four of them if he would have been responsible. My friend has been on her own since she was 18. With her two kids, she lives in an apartment, and is happy from what I see. She is back on her feet now, but it could still be better. Child support helps women and the children so much. Every father who has abandoned their child or children should have to pay it.

Another reason why men don't pay child support is because they feel like they are too much of a man to have to take care of their children. First of all, if they were men, they wouldn't have left their children. If they were men they would have stayed right by the mother's side. Men need to get over their big heads and realize

that they have responsibilities. A child is a big responsibility, and if they are as big as a man they say they are they shouldn't have a problem with being a parent. Just like the situation with my friend. The father of her kids thinks that he shouldn't have to care for his children because he is a man. He believes that men can do whatever they want. I don't know who told him what the meaning of a man is, but whoever it was really confused him. This guy is no where near being a man. A man is someone who knows right from wrong, and knows how to be a responsible human being. A man is someone who loves and takes care of his children without someone making him do it.

Children are a huge responsibility, and if you know you aren't ready to have one don't have sex. Having a child can make, or break you. In most cases for me, it breaks them. Is it because they don't love the child, or is it because they hate the mother? Whatever the reason be, I feel that no child should be neglected by either parent. Nowadays, it's men who mostly abandon their poor, innocent children. They abandon their children because they feel they aren't ready to take on such big responsibilities; they feel that the mother can support the child on their own, and also because they think they are too much of a man to have to take care of their children. Men need to stop abandoning their children, and live up to their full potential. The more abandoned children we have now will only lead to ten times as many abandoned children in the future. Men, please put an end to this madness.

Sample Essay #3

No Excuses

Many fathers fail to take responsibility for their children after they leave the mother or the mother leaves them. Some fathers don't take responsibility because they want revenge. Other fathers may try to deny their child or children. There are also the fathers who don't know what it is or how to be a parent.

Failure to take responsibility for any child because of revenge is immoral. Revenge hurts the child more than the mother. A child should never have to do without because his or her parents can't get along. The child or children should spend equal amounts of time with both parents at his or her sole discretion. Both parents are responsible for making sure the child or children have everything they need. If the parents can't get along then they can arrange things so they don't have to see each other. They could have relatives transport the child back and forth. Revenge is never an excuse for not caring for a child.

Many fathers try to deny the child or children. They don't want to take on the financial responsibility. Sometimes they don't want to lose their freedom. A lot of fathers try to put mothers down and deny the child or children, because they say the mother is "easy," or is a "slut." A good part of the time this is not true. It is just another excuse! If the father doesn't believe that the child or children are his he

could request a blood test. Most fathers won't request a blood test because they know the truth. There are some instances where it is not the father who denies the child. In my case I became pregnant when I was seventeen. The father admitted it was his, but his family called me a slut and tried to deny the child. Convincing the father that he needed proof. In the long run, there was no blood test. He claimed his child and never once helped me take care of our child.

There are many fathers who don't know what it is or how to care for a child. These fathers believe that their current way of life is more important. They don't fully understand their responsibilities. Some may not understand because they never had a father who was there for them. They may not know what it is to be or even to have a positive role model. They just don't have their priorities set straight. Unfortunately, I don't believe they ever will set their priorities or order of responsibility straight. The truth is they don't want to. They have to want to change before they can be helped to change. I learned the hard way. I thought I could straighten out my son's father. I thought I could help him to understand how much he could really enjoy having this child. It never worked. No matter how hard I tried, he never cared. A variety of girls, drugs, and alcohol is all he wanted. Just like his father! This is where I learned my lesson. They have to want to change before they can be helped to change!

There is no excuse for not supporting your child. Revenge hurts the child more than anyone else. Denial is immoral without good reason. There is a way to know the truth; therefore, it is not an excuse. A father who doesn't understand how to be a good parent can learn. Whether the timing was right or not, every child deserves the love and care they need for a healthy life from both parents. No Excuses!

Sample Essay #4

Reasons Deadbeat Dads Don't Want to Pay Child Support

By Tina Jackson

The reasons that we have so many deadbeat dads can vary. I know men who wouldn't mind paying child support because they love their children. Some of them do not have jobs but there is barely enough money to support themselves. There are other fathers that just don't want to stand up to their responsibilities. The three dads I know about are the ones who make very little money, the ones that think the children really don't need the money, and the dads who just refuse to pay child support because they don't want to stand up to their responsibilities.

My daughters sons father to me is a deadbeat dad. My grandson is seven years old. His dad has never really had a fulltime job until my grandson was six years old. The father always work part time or odd jobs. He made just enough money to pay his bills, buy food, and the other things he needed. If he had any money left he might buy his son a pair of shoes or something. So, when the father finally started to work a full time job my daughter filed for child support. The dad was really angry with my daughter. He said she made more money than he did so why should he have to pay? My daughter told him she knew that he didn't make a

lot of money, but he had never really contributed to his sons support. My daughter told him she felt it was about time!

My friend I will call her Marie. Marie was married for about ten years when her husband divorced her. He refused to pay child support. Her ex-husband said she made more money than he did and the children did not need his help. She got the house, the car, and the children. He said he felt no responsibility. Marie had to go and file for child support. She had to take off work, which took money away from her to file. The she had to take off of work to go to court. Although the husband made more money than she did. He still didn't want to pay. First he said he didn't think one of the children was his. They had to go through a legal paternity battle. Afterward, he was determined to be the father. He finally paid. My friend was tired by then.

I know this man he has three children by three different women. All of the children are grown now. He owes \$70,000.00 back child support. He has been running all of these years refusing to pay child support. He can never own any property, receive income tax, or unemployment. The courts have already taken his driver license. He is afraid to work because they will probably take most of his wages. So he lives from woman to woman letting them take care of him. My daughter was his girlfriend for awhile but she got tired of him not working because he refused to pay support. She put him out and he went to live with his mother. I think he is a very sad person for running away from his responsibilities. His children can't stand him. If he goes someplace and they are there. They will get up and leave. The father never played any kind of part in their lives, and they lived in the same city.

Conclusion not finished.

Sample Essay #5

By Maria Marchelle Garing

“Mothers know best.” The majority of people that end up taking care of their children are the mothers. They tend to be more responsible parents to their children than the fathers of their children. The mothers are the nurturers. They tend to feel more connected to their children than the fathers of their children. In my opinion, I believe that many fathers fail to take responsibility for their children after they have left the mothers of their children or after the mothers of their children have left them due to lack of responsibility, maybe the non-custodial parent’s visitation is denied, and simply by just being financially unstable.

First of all, the fathers abandon their children due to lack of responsibility. Some are too young to have children so they want “no strings attached.” They still want to have fun, “living their life to the fullest” as they say all the time without thinking of the possible consequences and not looking at the big picture. Then when a baby comes along, they realize they want a better life than taking care of the baby and they end up leaving both the mother and the baby because the baby was a mistake anyway. Some are old enough to be a father but on the other hand, they cannot handle the “stress” of supporting a family. Fathers abandon their children

because they do not want to deal with having to be responsible with more important things than his own life.

Second of all, some fathers tend to get custody of their children but visitations get denied. Cassandra Eastham points out in her essay "Forgotten Children" that fathers fail to support their children because the other parent wants to "get even" due to denied visitations. Lack of communication then follows the next step. Then they are convinced that the fault is not theirs to keep because it was not their fault that the visitations got denied.

Most of all, fathers fail to support their children due to the fact that they may be financially unstable. Some probably did not finish high school so it is hard for them to get a better job for a better pay or maybe they cannot find stable jobs. Some are maybe just too lazy to find a job. Others think that children are better off with their mothers because they are convinced that they are young children, they do not need money anyway. Others cannot even support himself. At the same time, they may still be depending on their parents for support, money-wise.

As a conclusion to this, fathers fail to support their children because they are not responsible enough to stand as fathers for their own children. Some fathers tend to feel that they need to get themselves together first in order to be the best parents their children need even after they have left the mothers of their children. They tend to put themselves first and put the future of their children's lives last.