Extended Definition Essay

In your next writing assignment, you will be able to choose an abstract concept to define in detail. Your essay should explain your unique opinion on the concept you chose—your definition should differ from what others might say or vary from the simple dictionary definition.

It should also include various strategies of definition (definition by function, example, structure, background and/or negation). Be as specific and detailed as possible; go beyond the obvious and give specific examples that illuminate your unique definition of the word. The final extended definition essay should be about 2 pages, typed and double spaced.

Structure:  
**Introduction**—Hook, background/context, thesis (your unique definition)  
**Body Paragraphs**—Topic sentences, definition strategies (evidence), analysis of how your evidence proves your thesis  
**Conclusion**—Summarize your extended definition and highlight the ways your definition is different, leave readers with a statement of the definition’s importance—the “so what?”

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The introduction grabs the reader’s attention and clearly states an interesting <strong>thesis</strong> that clearly and uniquely defines your chosen concept.</td>
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<td>Each body paragraph contains a clear and concise <strong>topic sentence</strong> and smoothly <strong>transitions</strong> from idea to idea.</td>
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<td>The thesis is clearly supported by a variety of appropriate evidence, including definition by <strong>example</strong>, <strong>function</strong>, <strong>structure</strong>, <strong>background</strong>, and/or <strong>negation</strong>. A variety of relevant details from text, personal experience, and society richly enhance the writer’s definition. The commentary convincingly develops the thesis.</td>
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<td>The <strong>conclusion</strong> summarizes the definition and explains its uniqueness and importance.</td>
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<td>The <strong>writing</strong> is smooth, skillful, and coherent throughout. <strong>Diction</strong> is sophisticated and appropriate for an academic audience.</td>
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<td>The writing is free of <strong>grammar/mechanics</strong> errors. The writer avoids use of 2nd person pronouns and smoothly embeds quotations into the text.</td>
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<td><strong>Rough draft</strong> is included and edited. <strong>Editing sheet</strong> is complete.</td>
<td>/10</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>/40</td>
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Possible topics for an extended definition essay:

1. Love  
2. Hope  
3. Independence  
4. Injustice  
5. Freedom  
6. Education  
7. Patriotism  
8. Pain  
9. Courage  
10. Honor  
11. Work  
12. Responsibility  
13. Beauty  
14. Kindness  
15. Compassion  
16. Sexism  
17. Gumption  
18. Racism  
19. Sportsmanship  
20. Modesty  
21. Self-assurance  
22. Dedication  
23. Sensitivity  
24. Sensitivity  
25. Trust  
26. Respect  
27. Ambition  
28. Right to privacy  
29. Generosity  
30. Laziness  
31. Charisma  
32. Common sense  
33. Team player  
34. Maturity  
35. Integrity  
36. Healthy appetite  
37. Frustration  
38. Optimism  
39. Sense of humor  
40. A teacher  
41. Physical fitness  
42. Marriage  
43. True friendship  
44. Courage  
45. Citizenship  
46. Success  
47. A coach  
48. Intelligence  
49. Personality  
50. Peer pressure  
51. Cruelty  
52. Leadership  
53. Persistence  
54. Responsibility  
55. Human rights  
56. Sophistication  
57. Self-respect  
58. Comfort Food  
59. A nerd/geek  
60. Heroism  
61. Thrift  
62. Sloth  
63. Vanity  
64. Pride  
65. Greed  
66. Virtue  
67. Progress  
68. A parent  
69. A fan  
70. A good student  
71. A good boss

Julius Caesar-specific ideas

- Ambition  
- Honor  
- Tyranny  
- A true friend  
- A good politician  
- A good spouse  
- Cowardice  
- Superstition  
- Heroism  
- Patriotism  
- Traitor  
- Trust  
- Guilt  
- Loyalty  
- Betrayal  
- Revenge  
- Deceit
WAYS TO DEFINE

Define by...

- Example—Use examples from life and from literature to illustrate your definition
- Negation—Define what the topic is NOT so you can clarify what it is; helps contrast your definition with others’ definitions
- Structure—Break into parts and define each part
- Function—Describe how it works in the real world, giving specific information
- Background—Give history of the word or idea

My Term:

What are some examples?

What is it not?

How does it function?

What are its parts?

What is its background/history?

Adapted from SpringBoard Textual Power