**Written Comprehension and Expression 5 Teacher: KHELEF Embarka**

**TD Paper 2: The Essay Developed by Definition**

**Definition**

Defining is identifying the features that distinguish a term, thereby putting a fence around it, establishing its boundaries, and separating it from all others. Knowing these features enables both you and your reader to use the term appropriately. Sometimes a word, phrase, or sentence will settle a definition question. But if the term is abstract (Abstract terms—those standing for things we cannot see, touch, or otherwise detect with our five senses—often require extended definitions); it is impossible to capture the essence of democracy or hatred or bravery in a single sentence: The terms are too complex, and people have too many differing ideas about what they mean., brief definitions won’t provide the reader with enough information for proper understanding. This is also true for an essay whose objective is to define.

When writing a definition essay, writers make use of three types of definition: synonyms, limited definitions and extended definitions that can run to several pages. The latter enable us to write long essays. While essential definitions and synonyms, denotating and specifying the basic dictionary meaning of the theme discussed, can be used to introduce the topic of the essay, it is the extended meaning that furnishes the body developmental paragraphs. (For more details, go to Scarry and Scarry 253-254)

**Exercise!**

**1. Identify the broad category and the distinguishing traits in each of these essential definitions:**

a. Gangue is useless rock accompanying valuable minerals in a deposit.

b. A catbird is a small American songbird with a slate-colored body, a black cap, and a catlike cry.

c. A soldier is a man or woman serving in an army.

d. Myelin is a white, fatty substance that forms a sheath around some nerve fibers.

e. A gargoyle is a waterspout carved in the likeness of a grotesque animal or imaginary creature and projecting from the gutter of a building.

f. A magnum is a wine bottle that holds about two-fifths of a gallon.

**2. Indicate which of the following statements are acceptable essential definitions. Explain what is wrong with those that are not. Correct them.**

a. A scalpel is a small knife that has a sharp blade used for surgery and anatomical dissections.

b. A puritan is a person with puritanical beliefs.

c. A kraal is where South African tribes keep large domestic animals.

d. A rifle is a firearm that has a grooved barrel and is used for hunting large game.

e. A motorcycle is a two-wheeled vehicle used mainly for human transportation.

f. Fainting is when a person loses consciousness owing to inadequate flow of blood to the brain.

**3. Write an essential definition for each of the following terms: a. happy hour b. family c- Covid 19**

**Why Do We Define?**

Essays of extended definition are usually written for one or more of the following reasons:

1. To clarify an abstract term or concept (“hero,” “success,” “friendship,” “loyalty”)
2. To provide a personal interpretation of a term that the writer feels is vague, controversial, misused, or misunderstood (“feminist,” “eco-terrorist,” “Feng Shui,” “multiculturalism”)
3. To explain a new or unusual term or phrase found in popular culture, slang, dialect, or within a particular geographic area or cultural group (“hip-hop,” “helicopter parent,” “McJobs,” “boomerang kids,” “lagniappe”)
4. To make understandable the language or technical terms of a particular field of study, a profession, or an industry (“deconstruction,” “identity spoofing,” “retinitis pigmentosa,” “subprime mortgage”)
5. To offer information about a term or an idea to a particular interested audience (antique collectors learning about “Depression glass,” movie buffs understanding “film noir”)
6. To inform and entertain by presenting the colorful history, uses, effects, or examples of a word, expression, or concept (“comfort food,” “Zydeco music,” “urban legends,” “Kwanzaa”)

Wyrick J.: 249

Writers can use as many strategies as necessary to clarify their definition. Depending on the subject, they may use any number of the following methods in your essay to define your term such as describing the parts or distinguishing characteristics , offering some examples , comparing to or contrasting with similar terms or explaining an operation or a process.

**Pitfalls to Avoid**

1. Don’t present an incomplete definition;
2. Don’t begin every definition essay by quoting the dictionary;
3. Don’t define vaguely or by using generalities;
4. Don’t offer circular definitions.

**Task: Write a five paragraph essay giving your definition for: Family, or Corona Viruses (Covid 19)**

Ref:

Wyrick J. (2011). *Steps to Writing Well*  with Additional Readings (8th ed) . Wadsworth Centgage Learning