

American Values, American Culture

We began the term by reading a summary of values important to Americans, and you responded to it by indicating which values you could see in your own life, and those you did not. One of the goals of this class is to understand the relationship between literature and the ideas and values that shape our nation. Since we will spend most of the time reading pieces that / choose, maybe we should begin by having you choose a work we should focus on. Follow the steps below to complete your first writing assignment.

1. Choose one of the 13 items from “Why Do Americans Act Like That?” It does not need to be one you agree with strongly (or disagree with strongly). In fact, after you go through step 2, you may decide to pick a different one.
2. Find a work from pop culture that is related to the theme you chose in step 1. You might pick a movie in which the main character succeeds because he/she follows the values closely, or you might pick a song in which the speaker disagrees with the idea. As long as the piece somehow contributes to a “discussion” of how we see that idea, it can work. Furthermore, you are not limited to what you choose—it can be a movie, a song, a book, a story, a documentary, etc. Just be sure to choose something with which you are reasonably familiar.
3. In one sentence, explain how the work relates to the idea (Most likely, the work will either *exemplify* the idea (be a perfect example of it) or *contradict* the idea (say the opposite of it). Write this sentence here. This will be your thesis.

4. Find two specific parts of the piece that would prove your thesis to be true. For a song, you might want to quote a line. For a movie, you might want to refer to a specific scene, or a certain plot event. Write these two elements here.
 - a.

 - b.
5. Now, write a short piece (about 150 – 300 words) that provides a brief synopsis of your work (a summary), and uses the two examples (or more) for #4 to prove the thesis in #3. This does not need to be typed, but should demonstrate some thought. Good luck!

This assignment will be due on _____