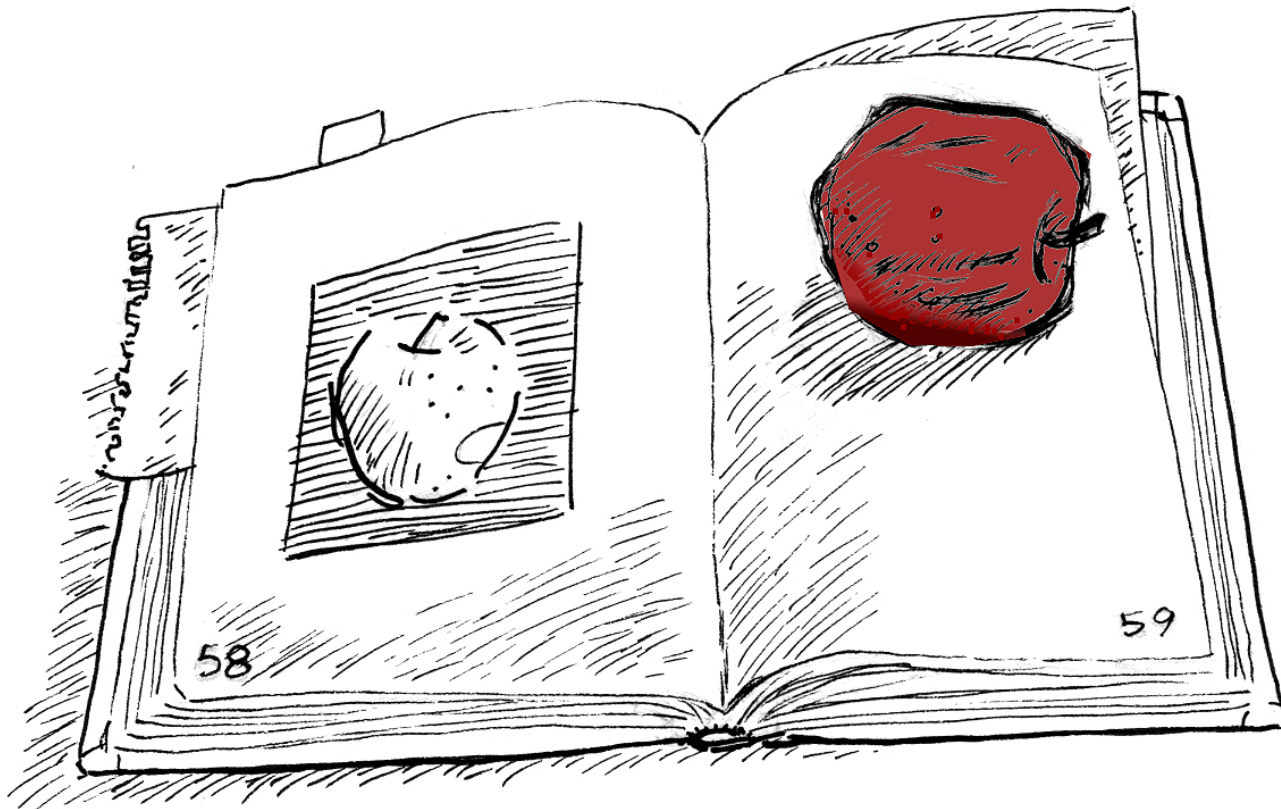


Definition — Part 1



Definition Essay Pattern

It best to pick large topics and *not* limited subjects when using this style.

The results are to establish a form of analysis to show

- **the components of a subject —or—**
- **the history behind the formation of a subject.**

For example:

When defining the term: “book,” an author would define how the printing press industry became a driving force behind the Renaissance arts movement, rather than writing on a specific product of the time period, such as the Guttenberg Bible itself.

Definition Essay Pattern

As with the other styles, definitions can be used as a portion of a larger piece of research, to clarify the terms used in your paper, *or* definitions can clarify the entire essay's intentions for defining one major subject.

Keep in mind, although in simplest terms you are taking out your dictionaries and seeing the development of a word or phrase, do *not* rely on the cliché act of quoting the definition out of the Random House Dictionary.

Think beyond the typical answer.

Definition Essay Pattern

There are seven techniques for this pattern:

1. Analysis: Divide the subject into parts and define each part separately.

(Explain the formation and/or structure behind the formation of hurricanes.)

2. Comparison/analogies: Taking an unfamiliar subject and clarifying it with comparisons and contrasts to a similar subject.

(Explain Australian-rules football by comparing it with Latin American football.)

3. Details/enumeration: Describe physical characteristics, elements, traditional thoughts, and other attributes that make up the subject.

(Explain the components of an essay: introduction, thesis, body, conclusion.)

Definition Essay Pattern

4. Negation: Defining a subject by what it is *not*.

(Explain American baseball by contrasting it with British cricket.)

5. Origins and Development: Where did the subject come from?

What is the background information? What is the history of the subject?

(Explain the origin & history of the Japanese poetry form called haiku.)

6. Results, Effects, and Uses: Discuss the primary use of the subject.

(Explain the results of using steroids for teen-age athletes.)

7. Another common technique is called **synonyms**: defining your word with words of similar meanings

(Explain similar wordings of snow: sleet, icy rain, snowflakes, blizzard, flurries.)

Definition Essay Pattern

Dictionaries give what are called **formal definitions**.

Essays using definition pattern are **extended definitions**; they extend meanings of selected words; they can go they go more in-depth than the academic dictionary meanings, or even deal with an author's personal reactions to a specific word itself. These include additional interpretations to the standard meaning behind a word or phrase.

Current examples of such essays will seek clarification of terms such as “right to life,” “same sex marriage,” “civil rights,” and “affirmative action.” Such essays utilize personal narratives and discuss personal definitions and experiences for a supplied subject.

Definition Essay Pattern

Slang terms offer strong essays as well.

The logic here, slang or “clique” languages often describe the thought process of a particular generation: the postwar generation, the beat generation, the lost generation, generation x— all of these various groups created their own unique style and coded phrases to differentiate themselves from their parents and the previous art culture.

Writers take terms and spin the definitions into a manner of defining themselves and/or their own generation.

Examples:

• *my bad* • *cat’s pajamas* • *google* • *i-pod* • *awesome* • *gag me with a spoon*