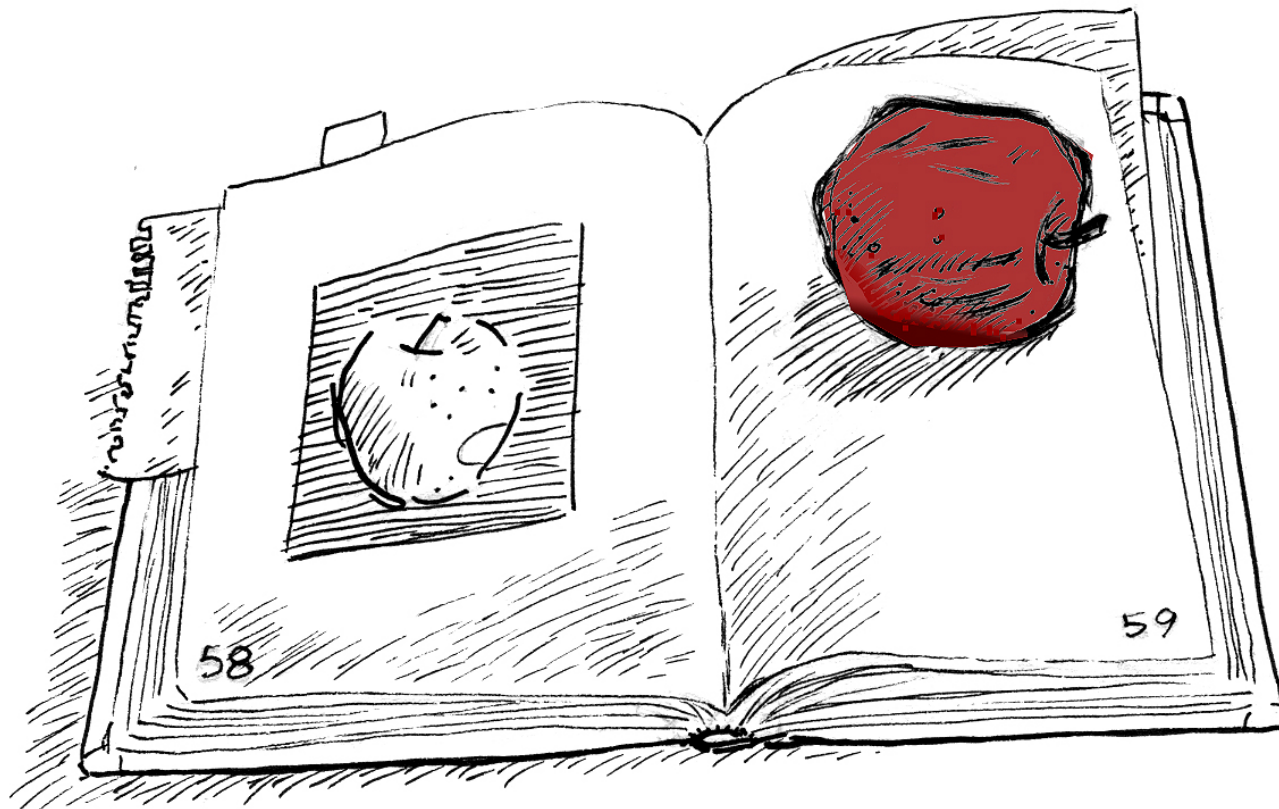


Definition Pattern — Part 2



Definition Pattern

When constructing a definition pattern essay, always consider the difference between the *denotation* of a supplied word and the possible *connotation* of the word.

- The denotation of a word and the author's connotation can carry different emphasis.

denotation: dictionary meanings

connotation: emotional, implied meanings

Definition Pattern

Dictionary.com shows over sixty entries for the word “rights.”

Example: rights—noun; **18.** a just claim or title, whether legal, prescriptive, or moral: You have a right to say what you please. **19.** Sometimes, rights. that which is due to anyone by just claim, legal guarantees, moral principles, etc.: women’s rights; Freedom of speech is a right of all Americans. **20.** adherence or obedience to moral and legal principles and authority. **21.** that which is morally, legally, or ethically proper: to know right from wrong. **22.** *a moral, ethical, or legal principle considered as an underlying cause of truth, justice, morality, or ethics.*

Definition Pattern

In the opening paragraphs of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson utilizes a definition process in order to defend the colonial political views.

When in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain *unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness*. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

Definition Pattern

When Jefferson uses the term *rights*, his definition takes on a different, emotional meaning for him; thus, his own connotation of the word forces the reader to see a slight twist on the expected denotation meaning of the word, which gives new meaning to the full text.

By using the phrase *pursuit of Happiness*— Jefferson is allowing a broad concept into his text allowing diverse interpretation of the document for future generations of citizens.

Definition Pattern

An example from a pop cultural perspective is Tim McGraw's song: "Back When."

Don't you remember
The fizz in a pepper
Peanuts in a bottle
At ten, two and four
A fried bologna sandwich
With mayo and tomato
Sittin' round the table
Don't happen much anymore

We got too complicated
It's all way over-rated
I like the old and out-dated
Way of life

refrain:

Back when a hoe was a hoe
Coke was a coke
And crack's what you were doing
When you were cracking jokes
Back when a screw was a screw
The wind was all that blew
And when you said I'm down with that
Well it meant you had the flu
I miss back when
I miss back when
I miss back when

I love my records
Black, shiny vinyl
Clicks and pops
And white noise
Man they sounded fine
I had my favorite stations
The ones that played them all
Country, soul and rock-and-roll
What happened to those times?

I'm readin' Street Slang For Dummies
Cause they put pop in my country
I want more for my money

The way it was back then
repeat refrain

Give me a flat top for strumming
I want the whole world to be humming
Just keep it coming

repeat refrain

Definition Pattern

In this case, McGraw's song shows a speaker who wants to be more in touch with the current trends, but he is nostalgic for the "simpler" times.

- Ironically, he utilizes new definition of words to criticize and make a point about changes in the mainstream culture. To stay current and relevant, he uses words with double meaning.
- Likewise, he defines himself as well as his interpretation of the phrases.

Definition Pattern

Overall, Definition essays, like Narration essays, can be very personal.

The author establishes his/her own personal connotation for a word or phrase in order to reminisce on past times, past values.

Keep in mind:

- different generations define words in different manners
- even an individual within a common demographic group can interpret a word in a unique fashion

Definition Pattern

Another example: a common concept which is analyzed and over-analyzed *ad nauseum* is the search for an explanation for the process of falling in love or defining the various aspects of the emotion.

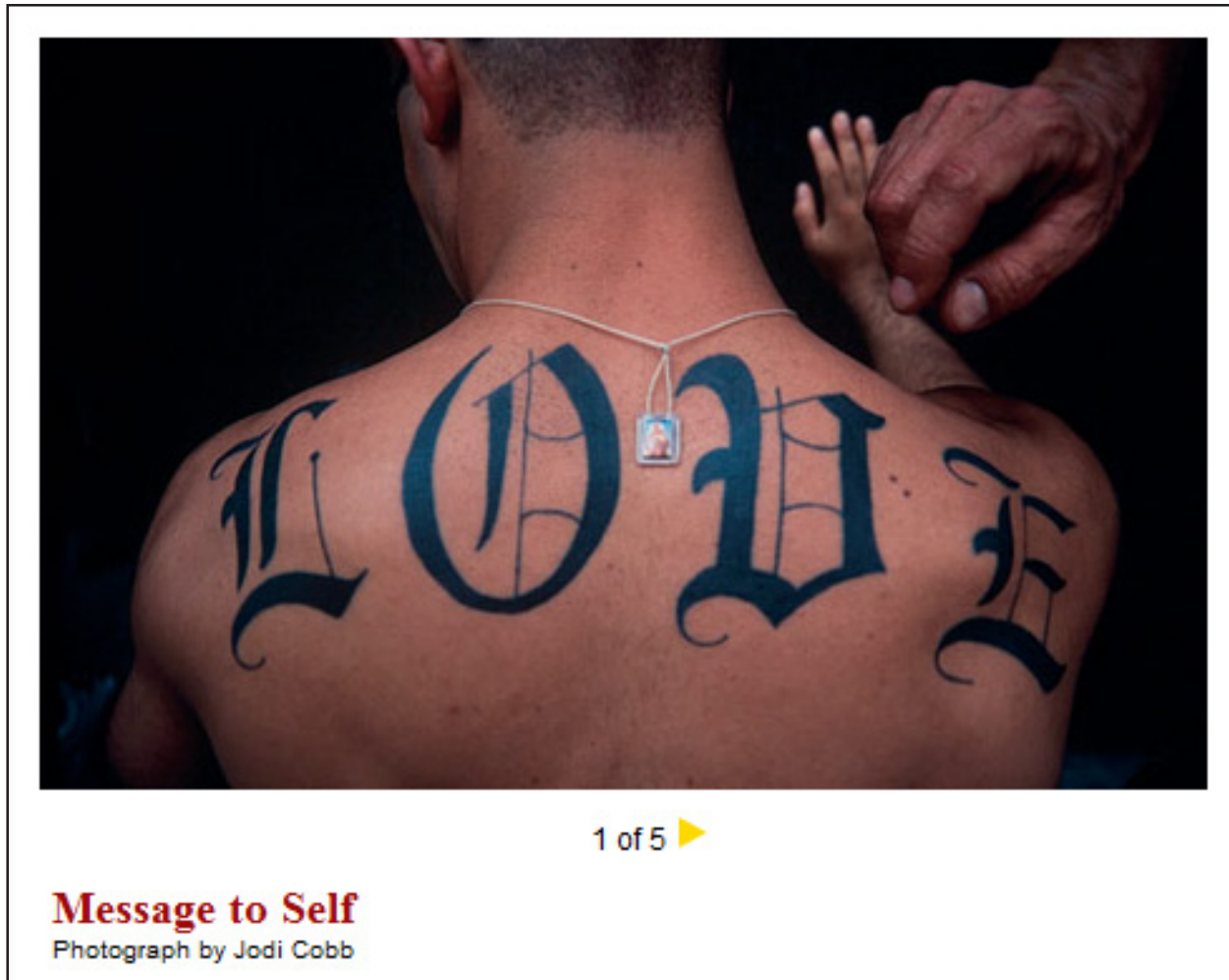
- Biblical sources seek out a stronger meaning of the word, the Ancient Greeks & Romans sought out clarification of the feeling, and in Renaissance England, poets wrote hundreds of sonnets on the subject.
- Most of the sonnets attributed to William Shakespeare examine the many facets of love.

Definition Pattern

William Shakespeare (1564 - 1616) || Sonnet #116

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O no! it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
*Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come:
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.*

Definition Pattern



Some people go to great lengths to express their interpretation of the word.

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0602/feature2/gallery1.html>

Definition Pattern

In this image, from a 2006 February issue of *National Geographic*, aside from the obvious interpretation of the young man's devotion to the positive ramifications of the emotion, the photograph's message takes on newer insight once one begins a slight analytical approach.

- the process of getting a tattoo is painful, yet exists as a source of pride
- love is confirmed as a painful and pleasurable process
- the size and typographical representation of the letters express the young man's enthusiasm
- he chose to display the lettering his upper back as a sign of carrying a burden, a weight of devotion
- the amulet dangling across his shoulders is a religious icon of the Virgin Mary
- the descending hand shown mirrors the theme of the Sistine Chapel with the scene of God reaching out to Adam

By examining the photo in this context, the viewer begins redefining the image to suit the word 'love,' and likewise, the viewer begins examining his/her personal definition of the word.