

Writing a Definition Essay

SUGGESTED LEARNING STRATEGIES: **Drafting, Graphic Organizer, Revising**

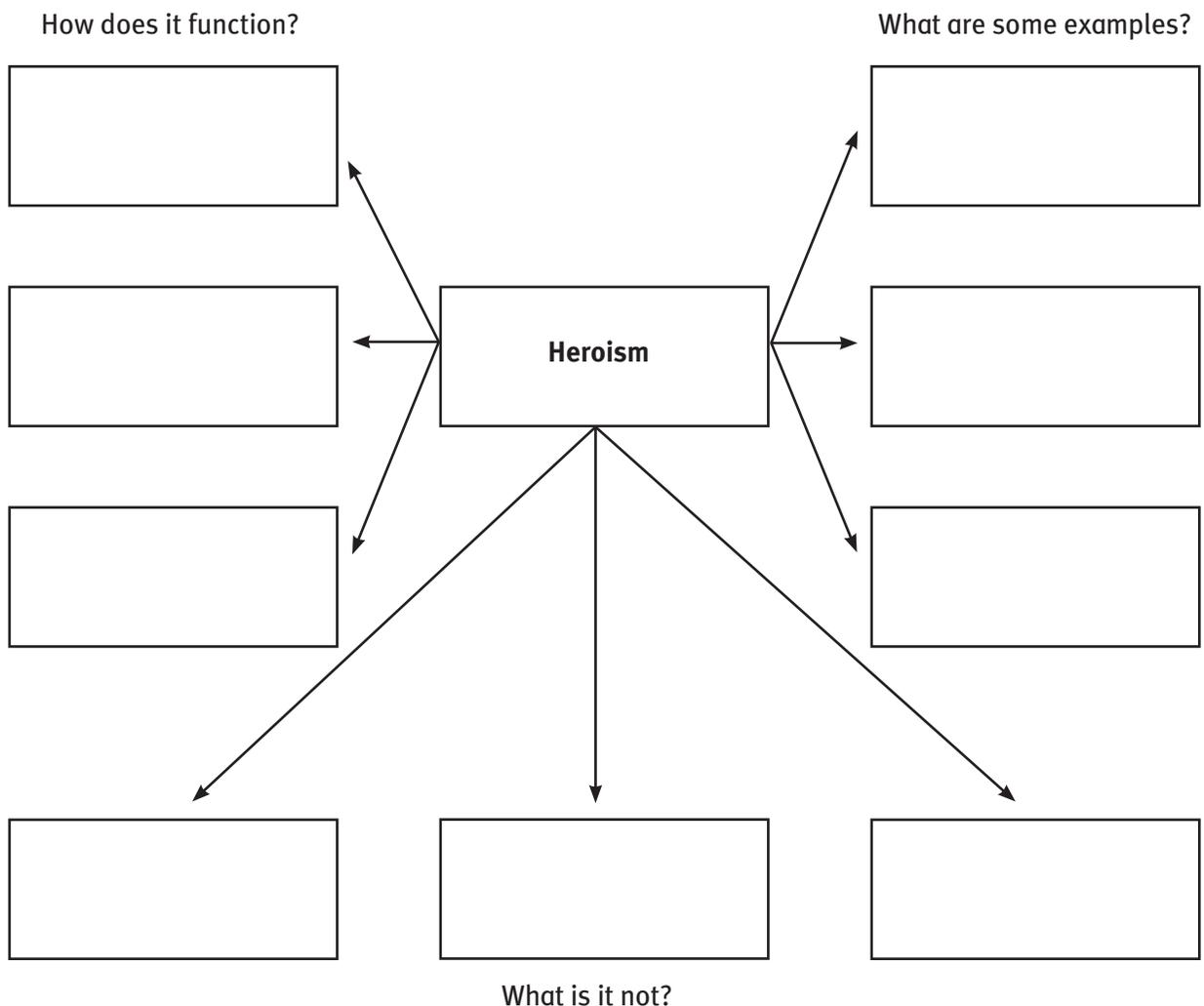
Assignment

Your assignment is to write a multi-paragraph essay that defines your concept of heroism. You will use various strategies of definition (definition by function, example, and negation) to explain your unique opinion on the concept.

Steps

Prewriting/Planning

1. Revisit your responses to the Essential Question: What defines a hero? You may ask yourself, “To what extent or to what degree can a person or an action be heroic?”
2. Next, categorize your ideas on the graphic organizer by the strategies of definition, and brainstorm details that will support your ideas. Details may come from texts (fiction, nonfiction, film), your own experiences, and historical or current society.



Drafting

3. Introduce your ideas by providing a hook, context, and a thesis (your ideas should move from general to specific). One way to draw your reader into the essay is to use a quotation related to the concept. To contextualize your thesis, you might discuss commonly held beliefs about heroism that do not match your definition. This allows you to point out the weaknesses in those definitions in comparison to yours.
4. Use a variety of definition strategies to define heroism as you draft the body paragraphs of your essay. Consider organizing each paragraph around a different strategy. Remember:
 - ▶ Paragraphs using the **function** strategy demonstrate how heroism functions or operates in the real world.
 - ▶ Paragraphs using the **example** strategy use examples to help the reader understand your definition. These examples often come from texts.
 - ▶ Paragraphs using the **negation** strategy explain what something is by showing what it is not. Using negation helps to contrast your definition with others' definitions.
5. Draft a conclusion that leaves the reader with a final impression about your definition. The conclusion of a definition essay often ends by focusing on the question: "So what?" It encourages the reader to accept the definition you presented.

Revising

6. After you have written an initial draft of your essay, go back to your thesis. Does your definition reflect your unique opinion? Is your thesis clearly stated in the introduction of your essay?
7. Continue to revise your essay to make sure you have effectively used various strategies of definition. Using more than one strategy of definition allows you to use a wide range of examples. Can your reader relate to your examples? Do you use enough examples to help the reader understand your unique point of view?
8. Consult the Scoring Guide to ensure that you have met specific criteria.

Editing for Publication

9. Carefully edit your final draft for punctuation and language conventions.

SCORING GUIDE

Scoring Criteria	Exemplary	Proficient	Emerging
Ideas	<p>The concept of heroism is uniquely and clearly defined.</p> <p>Three strategies of definition are skillfully employed (definition by function, example, and negation).</p> <p>A variety of relevant details from text, personal experience, and/or historical or current society richly enhance the writer's definition. All commentary convincingly develops the thesis.</p>	<p>The concept of heroism is adequately defined.</p> <p>Two strategies of definition are employed (definition by function, example, or negation).</p> <p>Relevant details from text, personal experience, and/or historical or current society are used to support the writer's definition. Most commentary develops the thesis.</p>	<p>The concept of heroism is minimally defined.</p> <p>One strategy of definition is employed (definition by classification, function, example, negation).</p> <p>Relevant details from text, personal experience, and/or historical or current society may be present, but they lack or may not be concrete enough to give a full understanding of the concept. Commentary does not develop the thesis or may be missing.</p>
Organization	<p>The writer skillfully structures the essay with an engaging introduction containing an insightful thesis, well-developed body paragraphs, and a powerful conclusion.</p>	<p>The writer structures the essay with an introduction containing a clear thesis, developed body paragraphs, and a thoughtful conclusion.</p>	<p>The organization of the essay is confusing and the essay may be missing one or more of the following: an introduction with a thesis, developed body paragraphs, or an adequate conclusion.</p>
Use of Language	<p>Writing is smooth, skillful, and coherent throughout the essay.</p> <p>Diction is sophisticated and appropriate for an academic audience.</p>	<p>Writing is smooth and coherent throughout most of the essay.</p> <p>Diction is appropriate for an academic essay.</p>	<p>Writing is incoherent throughout the essay.</p> <p>Diction is repetitive, vague, or inappropriate for an academic essay.</p>
Conventions	<p>Writing is virtually error-free. The writer uses proper punctuation and capitalization to smoothly embed quotations into text.</p>	<p>Writing is generally error-free. The writer uses proper punctuation and capitalization to embed quotations into text.</p>	<p>Writing contains errors that distract from meaning. At times, the writer attempts proper punctuation and capitalization to incorporate quotations into text.</p>

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Scoring Criteria	Exemplary	Proficient	Emerging
Evidence of Writing Process	There is extensive evidence that the essay reflects the various stages of the writing process.	There is evidence that the essay reflects stages of the writing process.	There is little or no evidence that the essay has undergone stages of the writing process.
Additional Criteria			

Comments:
