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Creating a "Mock Essay" to Teach MLA Format

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Erin Micklo

Illinois Math and Science Academy

MLA Instruction: Mock Essay Lesson

Abstract: This lesson requires students to write a “mock essay” using fictional sources and a creative, entertaining topic to demonstrate MLA proficiency.

Common Core Standards: W.9-10.2 ; W.9-10.4; and W.9-10.8

Procedure:

Day 1:

1. Give students instruction on where to find MLA resources. I recommend the Purdue Owl site and I show them how to navigate around the site.
2. Explain the Mock Essay assignment to them and show them a sample student essay, “Cucumbers are Gross.”
3. Encourage students to choose an original, school-appropriate topic, and remind them that this will be the one time they get to make up sources and put words in people’s mouths!
4. Show them another sample Mock Essay, “Evil Rubber Duckies” and discuss how it does or does not fully meet the requirements of the assignments.
5. Homework: Students should write their own Mock Essay.

Day 2:

1. Give students the “Mock Essay: Peer Edit practice” essay. Give them 15-20 minutes to find as many mistakes as possible in it. There are over 20 MLA errors, as well as a few grammar errors.
2. As a class, go over the essay making corrections. Attached is a key that can be used for this. Students will most likely realize that they have made *many* MLA errors.
3. Have students revise their own Mock Essays and turn them in. On the day they turn them in have them share them in small groups (4-5 students per group) so they get to enjoy one another’s creativity. You can then have them share a few with the entire class.

Materials (all below):

Internet Access (Purdue OWL website)

Mock Essay Prompt and Sample “Cucumbers are Gross”

Second Mock Essay sample “Evil Rubber Duckies”

Mock Essay Peer Edit Practice Essay

Mock Essay Peer Edit Practice KEY (for teacher)

MOCK ESSAY PROMPT

Create a “Mock Essay” similar to this (on ANY topic of your choice) in which you MAKE UP sources, quotations, etc. (no real research required). In your mock essay be sure to include at least one of each of the following quotes, as well as the other criteria listed below:

- Short (direct) quotation
- Long (direct) quotation (correctly placed into a “quote block”)
- Paraphrase from an outside source
- An introduction with a hook, background information, and an underlined thesis statement
- Works Cited page using the correct MLA format—should include a citations from at least four sources—one website, one book, one newspaper or magazine article, and one online database.

It’s okay if your essay “ends” rather abruptly—you aren’t writing the entire essay—just the first page and a half to two pages of it. No conclusion is necessary. Be sure on page two that you have your last name and page number in a header in the upper right-hand corner.

It should be approximately 1 ½-2 pages in length PLUS a Works Cited page, typed and double-spaced. NO handwritten assignments will be accepted. Humor is encouraged and appreciated!

Steve Stevenson
Literary Explorations
Mock Essay

Cucumbers Are Gross

A cucumber should be well sliced, and dressed with pepper and vinegar, and then thrown out, as good for nothing” (Boswell 67). As Samuel Johnson illustrates so clearly in the quote above, the cucumber is a disgrace to food everywhere. Studies nationwide have found the cucumber to be the most disliked of all vegetables (Emout 22). In a study I myself conducted, 90% of respondents said they would never even grow the vegetable in their garden, for fear of its terrible qualities spreading to their other vegetables. Because of its consistency and taste, the cucumber is the grossest food in the human diet.

“One of the most important factors in determining a food’s success or failure in popularity is its consistency” (Right 104). Something that tastes slimy when being chewed automatically results in a feeling of disgust. Such is one of the many problems that plagues the cucumber. The interior has a texture similar to moist fish scales: not hard, but not soft. Drs. Moe, Larry, and Curly explain:

Basically, the cucumber incorporates water into the construction of its inner and outer skin. In doing so, the hydrocarbons from the cucumber plant only partially bind to one another due to the magnetic interference from the extra water molecules. This partial binding creates the unusual texture experienced when a person bites into a cucumber, and adds to the intense flavor. (Fine 433)

As the good doctors above so clearly articulated, the cucumber’s poor texture is a direct result of its own development. The Center For Steve is Always Right (CFSAR), in a study contacted last year, found only 6% of Americans didn’t mind the gross feel of the cucumber plant (CFSAR). In creating a disgusting surface, it

has made its survival much more likely since no one wants to eat something so vile. Or has it? Maybe we should exterminate the horrific plant, but that discussion shall be left for another day. We turn now to the cucumber's taste, another deplorable aspect to an already horrible food.

Perhaps one of humankind's most valued sense is the sense of taste. In America, one could argue it is used too much. Regardless, the sense of taste helps to weed out those foods that don't quite make the grade. At the top of this "weed out" list is the cucumber. According to esteemed researcher Kenneth Toomuchtimeonhishands, the cucumber has the "lowest success rate in initial taste tests of any food" (96). It shouldn't be of any real surprise; the cucumber tastes like some wet seaweed plucked from the ocean, only worse and unsalted. While this was at one time acceptable, to say a caveman, food has become more of a pleasure than a necessity, especially in developed countries such as the United States. While one might use the argument that if starving, a person would eat anything, that is too general of a statement to really defend the cucumber. Under those pretenses, I might also eat tree bark. According to Dr. Yahrite, tree bark actually has more nutritional benefit than the cucumber (34). Therefore, there wouldn't even be a *necessity* to eat the cucumber...

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Stevenson 2

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- Toomuchtimeonhishands, Kenneth. "Taste Tests No One Else Would Do." *Magazine Nobody Reads*. 10 Sep. 2004: 43-48.
- Yahrite, Hoha. *The Nutrition We are Missing!* New Lenox: Most Random House, 2000.

SECOND SAMPLE MOCK ESSAY:

Jane Doe

Mrs. Micklo

Literary Explorations 1

7 December 2009

Evil Rubber Duckies

“Squeak! Squeak!” goes the little yellow “rubber ducky” crushed underneath a little kid’s precious hands. To many, the duck is an adorable toy that was a wonderful part of their childhood experience. To the toy, it was a miserable experience, being squeezed constantly, thrown on the ground, and then left all by its lonesome. It was abused by many people. In fact, approximately 9 out of 10 people in the U.S. who had a rubber duck when they were a child abused them (Vader 43). After going through such horrible emotional and physical abuse, the ducks went through a mental and emotional breakdown, leading them to become evil little ducks (Punk 87). The loveable “rubber duckies”, motivated by years of abuse, are actually evil and intend to destroy their owners.

The first step the ducks took to initiate their “take over the world” scheme was to terrorize the lives of their owners and then force them to forever hold their peace. One particular duck, the “rubber ducky” of Ernie, the Sesame Street character, was especially abusive. On screen Ernie and the duck are best of friends; behind the scenes is a whole other story. Ernie confesses that, “[Rubber Ducky] hits [Ernie] with a baseball bat and sometimes whips [him]. It’s a hassle for [him] to hide [his] wounds, but [Rubber Ducky] forces [him] to be quiet. Otherwise, [he] would be punished severely” (qtd. in Hurt). From his confession, it can be seen that poor Ernie is terrorized and physically abused by his rubber duck. This is all caused by the utter hatred the ducks have towards their owners. A suicide terrorist “rubber ducky”, with the alias Devil, once said:

The owners of rubber ducks are so abusive. Don’t they know that it hurts to get squeezed? It is so painful that they do not understand, they cannot see past [the rubber ducks’] everlasting

smiles. They are so dense in the head that they continue causing [them] pain, and because of their stupid ignorance, they will die soon. (28)

It can be seen that the rubber duck has rather strong feelings against the owners. He really wants to exterminate all the rubber duck owners in the world, and this shows he wants revenge, big time. With their first step down, the supposedly cute little “rubber duckies” are closer to reaching their goal of world domination. Perhaps, the owners should be a little scared.

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Hurt, Bruce S. “Abuse Stories.” *Rubber Duck Owners Abuse Hotline*. OJ Simpson, 18 Oct. 2004. Web. 5 Dec. 2009. <<http://www.rubberducksftw.com/abusehotline.html>>

Punk, Emo. *10 Reasons Why Rubber Ducks Hate You and Your Mom*. New York: Bathtub, 2006. Print.

Vader, Darth. “Come to the Dark Side: We Have Rubber Duckies.” *Time* 2 Sep. 2007: 43. Print.

Mock Essay: Peer Edit Practice

1. *Make sure that all criteria for the essay was met (long quote, short quote, paraphrase)*
2. *Make sure parenthetical documentation is correct*
3. *Make sure Works Cited is in the correct format*
4. *Make sure essay FORMAT follows MLA guidelines (heading, title, margins, headers, etc)*
5. *Check for grammatical errors*

Joe Sample

English 1102

September 16, 2007

THE POLITICS OF ORGANIZED SPORTS

You would think that when it comes to sports and competition, the best person gets the job whether it is playing, coaching or even being the water boy. In today's world of organized sports, politics and favoritism sticks out like a sore thumb. It is not just on the professional level either. In college, high school and even as low as junior high, certain players are given special treatment for various reasons. Being the coach's son or daughter is a common reason along with your parent's status in the area, a player's athletic ability or even race in a few cases.

Organized sports has turned in to a "what can you do for me type of business". (Monroe) Some players have been so successful in their sport that they even expect to be treated better than everyone else:

Why do I have to go to practice every day, practice isn't important, it's what happens on the court. If I come out and score 50 points with practicing, why do I still need to practice? It's obvious that I don't and the rest of my team needs to just pass me the ball or go to another team. I may just show up for the important games like playoffs if I want so what, I'm the best so I can (Iverson 56)

In the high school ranks, players are just getting their feet wet in the world of boosters, gifts under the table or losing a game on purpose. Sport's is definitely a game on and off the playing field or court. You have to take what you can get while the getting is good or you will be broke wondering what happened to your chance at being a star athlete. (Fuller 86)

Today's athletes are pampered beyond belief and think they should be treated differently simply because they were given a chance to showcase their given talent. Even in the eyes of the law most athletes

get a slap on the wrist for crimes that the average Joe would go to jail for. Maybe it is the way it is because we allow it. We wish or even strive to be like our favorite athletes to the point of where nothing else matters sometimes. I guess we just wish we could be treated different and were able to get out of any situation we got ourselves in to by throwing money at it. I say let's pay the players \$10 an hour and let's see if their mind set changes. I doubt Terrell Owens would be taking hits over the middle for \$10 an hour. He prefers to get his multimillion dollar salary (Monroe). Then again he did it in high school and college for free because he loved the game. I guess he doesn't love it as much any more.

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Monroe, James. The Change of Sports Over Time. New Orleans: Bourbon Street Publishing, 2003

Bertman, Scott. "Are Players Above Their Sport?" ESPN Magazine. 12 December 2002: 55-60.

Fuller, Corey. "Striking While the Iron is Hot." High School Sports World Online. 28 August 2005.

www.highschoolsportsworldonline.com.

KEY FOR MOCK ESSAY PEER EDIT PRACTICE

Mock Essay: Peer Edit Practice

1. *Make sure that all criteria for the essay were met (long quote, short quote, paraphrase)*
2. *Make sure parenthetical documentation was done correctly*
3. *Make sure Works Cited is in the correct format*
4. *Check for grammatical errors*

Joe Sample

English 1102

September 26, 2005

THE POLITICS OF ORGANIZED SPORTS

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