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# LITERACY ESSAY

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## Intersections Between The Literate Family and the The Amateur Family

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### Rubric:

The essay will be graded according to the following rubric. Make sure you really take the time to think about your past and how you have been affected by language use, books and film, ect.

### Thesis/Focus

The presentation has a clear, compelling, kairotic argument supported by effective rhetorical appeals and strategies for the audience selected.

A Clear Thesis controls the focus of the entire essay.

The Thesis is worth writing about, and is limited in scope.

### Organization

Overall organization of the paper is purposeful. Paragraphs are logically and strategically placed.

Transitions are clear, and establish relationships between parts of the argument.

### Prompts:

In Thayer's *Literate Family* he discusses six categories of family vocabulary: hiding words, obscenity, violence, books and film, metaphor, and the pleasure of language. He addresses the consequences that come from thoughtless language use, and the benefits of an awareness of the language that is prevalent in a family. Chabon discusses the pleasures of creating a family "fandom" or language of inclusion within the family circle. For this essay, pick one of the following options, and write a focused and well-supported personal essay based on your own experience.

#### *Language Use*

Choose a specific category of language Thayer discussed. Explain how it was used in your family and discuss the consequences of that use. Did you have unifying family language? How did that affect your family relationships? Other topics might include the following: Did you grow up in a family where relatives used profanity carelessly, rendering the use of certain 'taboo' words unremarkable to you? Did you come from a background where sexual terms were never discussed, or only with the use of euphemism or hiding words? How did that affect you? Remember to explain the consequences of your families specific vocabulary.

#### *Family Dialectics*

Did your family have specific language they used to solve disagreements? Was conflict resolution a positive or negative experience? How has that shaped the way you see your own language use?

## Style

Introduction immediately captures the attention of the audience.

Paper maintains reader interest through strong and concrete examples, active verbs, fresh metaphors, similes, personifications, and honest voice.

Connection to the reader is established through relevant examples from the text, and from personal experiences that appeal to the reader's senses and allow them to visualize scenes.

Precise language is used to clearly express ideas.

Sentence structure is varied.

Author shows versus tells.

## Development

Supporting evidence is thorough, relevant, and detailed.

Development demonstrated insight about the topic.

Development convinces reader of the thesis.

Paper shows original thought and insight regarding the topic.

**Remember: Creativity is encouraged!**

## *The Language of Love*

You might also introduce family vocabulary that was not specifically introduced by Thayer. For example, one student addressed the positive language of adoption, one wrote about changes in their family vocabulary after divorce, and another wrote about the many different ways her family has of expressing “I Love You.”

## *Family Fandoms*

Discuss the Chabon essay in view of Thayer's assertion that books are more important than film. Use your own experience to back up your claims. You may argue language use, literacy levels of families who focus only on films, or television, versus those who immerse themselves in books, or that creating a common language of any kind increases family literacy by creating a shared language to bond with. Remember to use concrete examples.

## *Communicating with Style*

Thayer mentions the consequences of metaphors such as “falling in love.” Were there controlling or important metaphors in your family? For example, one student discussed her families reliance on the metaphor, “We were dealt a bad hand of cards,” and another wrote about her families motto of “Always finish the race.” These two metaphors determined their entire families attitudes to difficult situations.

## *A Note on the Personal Experience:*

Use personal essay to discuss the prompts. Any topic you choose should be written through the lens of your own experience. Try to keep as close to your memories as possible, but you may include dialogue or description that represents the ‘spirit’ of events from your memory if certain specifics have faded from your memory. Try to interest the audience through concrete examples and memories that engage the senses. Remember to show, don't tell.