

## CHAPTER 8

1

## PARAGRAPHS AND THEMES

The Paragraph**Definition of a Paragraph:**

A group of sentences which are examples of the general idea of the topic sentence.

**Definition of a Topic Sentence:**

One sentence, usually the first sentence of the paragraph, which tells the reader what the paragraph will discuss. The topic sentence is never a question.

**Definition of an Introductory Sentence:** The first sentence of the paragraph. This sentence should be the topic sentence.

**Definition of Body Sentences:**

The sentences which are between the first sentence and last sentence of the paragraph. They give specific examples (things that a reader can see, feel, touch, smell, or hear) which support the topic sentence's idea.

**Definition of Concluding Sentence:**

The last sentence of the paragraph can be a summary (summarizing the three key points in the body), prediction (a logical conclusion based on what is in the body), or question (the reader can easily find the answer in the body).

**Definition of Good Paragraph Development:**

The details in the body of the paragraph should be very specific. There is no exact formula for accomplishing this. Still, my experience has determined that if a writer devotes two to five sentences to every example in the body, s/he will have achieved solid paragraph development.

## Outline

- A. **Topic Sentence:** My wedding day was beautiful for different reasons.
- B. **Examples of the Topic Sentence:**
1. weather
  2. ceremony
  3. people
- C. **Concluding Sentence:** My wedding day was beautiful

**PARAGRAPHS AND THEMES**

because of the weather, ceremony, and people.

My wedding day was beautiful for different reasons. I married in December. It had snowed five days before. However, it did not snow on that day. Great! The day was sunny and cold. The ceremony was a candlelight ceremony. The candles' glow gave a solemn effect in the church. The organist played beautiful songs. The soloist sang the Lord's Prayer. She sounded lovely. Then, my husband and I said our vows. We shall never forget each other's words. Of course, there was the minister. His words inspired us. After the ceremony, we had a big party. We danced and danced and danced. The guests, bridesmaids, groomsmen, ushers, hostesses, band members, and hotel workers were very cooperative. Therefore, my wedding day was beautiful because of the weather, the ceremony, and people.

**The Theme**

There are different kinds of themes. They fall into four main categories: expository (presenting facts), argumentative (trying to persuade), narrative (telling a story), and descriptive (providing in-depth details about a certain item or situation). In college, instructors will, for the most part, expect exposition. In certain cases, they will expect you to "take a stand"; this will require argumentation. The focus of this book is mainly on the expository theme (also, referred to as an essay) with examples of two of the remaining three. It is in college or high school that your instructors can provide intense instruction on all four main types of discourse. Again, let me remind you that this handbook aims to give you the bare basics to help you survive until you get that detailed instruction. Ok??

**Definition of a Theme:** A group of paragraphs which develop the three main points of the thesis sentence.

**Definition of a Thesis Sentence:** One sentence, usually the last sentence of the introductory paragraph, which contains three main points. This sentence should clearly specify the theme's main purpose. The thesis NEVER asks a question.

**Definition of the Introductory Paragraph:** The first paragraph of the theme. It should let the reader know the

## CHAPTER 8

3

basis for your discussion of the topic. You should state the thesis in this paragraph.

**Definition of Body Paragraphs:** The paragraphs which are between the introductory and concluding paragraphs, usually, there are three body paragraphs. There can be more. Each body paragraph gives examples of one of the points of the thesis.

**Definition of the Concluding Paragraph:** The last paragraph of the theme. It should summarize and state the significance of the ideas presented in the paper.

### Sample Comparison of Paragraph and Theme

**Note:** Although both discuss the same topic, notice the difference in the depth of the discussion. The theme goes into more details.

#### Paragraph

Different things are important to people. First, for many people money is most important. They feel that money can get the things they want. They feel these things will make them happy. Next, careers are most important to some people. They will work from sunrise to sunset. They take work home from the office. They take work on vacations. Finally, there are people who feel that family and friends are important. They treasure the time that they spend with their parents, spouses, children, other relatives, and friends. They prefer to see their niece in a kindergarten play even if they can make extra money working overtime. Thus, money, careers, or family are most important to most people.

#### Theme

What is most important? As people get older, they tend to contemplate on this question. In many cases, they notice a change in their attitude. As a new college graduate, a person may feel getting that great job is paramount. However, facing a few tough times, that same person may see it is the support of a family that is most significant. Therefore, money, careers, or family is the most important to an individual.

First, money is most important to some people. They want the sports car, the five-bedroom, Tudor-styled home, and extensive wardrobe. With money people can travel to the Smokies, scale the peaks of Kilimanjaro, or bathe in the waters of Tahiti on a cruise. Needless to say, money can, also,

help people provide an education for their loved ones or themselves. Since money has the potential to provide tangibles, travel, and tutelage, it is significant to many.

Careers are another item of importance. Some people are trying to move up the corporate ladder. Some want to become the chief of surgeons at a major hospital. Others want to become famous actors or actresses. If it is necessary that they miss their son's first performance in the National Little League World Series, they will. If the boss asks them to postpone a family vacation (planned six months before), they will. If they feel they will get a promotion by using another person's idea for a project, they will. Unfortunately, the career's importance outweighs that of the family; disappointments occur.

On the other hand, family and friends are most important to many people. These individuals will always visit the aunt or uncle in a retirement home. They look forward to the holiday get-togethers. They go to the recital of a friend's daughter. They know that both the friend and the child want them there. They provide the moral, emotional, and economic support to a friend or family member whenever the situation warrants. People who value friends and family above everything have learned that no amount of money or job will give the comfort and love that people whom they hold dear can. Probably, these people are the most content?

Every person must determine what is most important for him/her. It may be wealth, professional position, or loved ones. Still, in a quiet moment of every individual, s/he will answer the question. Possibly, the lure of being able to do whatever he wants with no financial restrictions will guide his answer. Then, again, the power of a position may satisfy his need. Still, for another, s/he will hold dear above all else the people who touch his/her life so intimately. Ultimately, it is the latter that will give most people the most wealth and power—wealth of family and friends and the power of love.

#### A Quick Guide to Writing A Theme

1. Write the very last sentence of the theme first! The last sentence should state what is the real reason you are writing your paper; it serves as the philosophy or "soul" of your paper. Once you know what you really want to convey to the reader in this paper—why this subject is so very important—then, this sentence will guide you throughout the writing of the theme. Write this sentence on a sheet of paper and look at it as you begin to write every paragraph. Then, make it the last sentence of your paper.
2. Choose a topic you like.

## CHAPTER 8

5

3. Think of three items you would like to discuss about the topic.
4. Sketch an outline; if you cannot think of three specific examples about each item, then, change the item.
5. For every specific example, you should devote two to five sentences developing each example so that it is very specific—something a person can see, touch, taste, smell, or hear.
6. The introductory paragraph should set the tone for your paper and gain the reader's attention.
7. The concluding paragraph should reiterate your key points and emphasize the purpose for the paper—the “soul” of the paper.

## The Outline

I must be honest with you. As a high school student, I detested having to do an outline. However, one of my favorite English teachers, Sister Mary Dolores, helped me recognize its purpose. I decided if I ever became an English teacher I would try to make the outline more functional and worthwhile (from my point of view). There are many different ways to outline. I am only sharing the one that I have devised for my students. After many years of using this format, hundreds of students have shared with me and with other teachers who have used this format, that it helps them set up themes and speeches.

The important point I wish to make here is it is very important that you outline BEFORE writing your theme (essay). Do you ever feel that your ideas are going every “whichway” but getting no where? The outline can help you avoid this frustration. You should see the outline as the blueprint to your house (the theme). No reputable contractor builds a house without a blueprint. Thus, no student wishing to be a decent writer should write a theme without some kind of outline.

## Outline

- Step I. Thesis Sentence: Upon my death in order for several people to remember me favorably, I have tried to be kind, honest, and hard-working.
- Step II. Body Paragraphs:
  - A1. Topic Sentence: First, I would like people to

## PARAGRAPHS AND THEMES

remember me as being kind.

1. Say hello to strangers
2. Compliment people
3. Accentuate the positive aspects of people

A2. Concluding Sentence: Is it any wonder why I consider myself kind?

B1. Topic Sentence: Next, I would like people to remember me as being honest.

1. Give back change if incorrect
2. Turn in lost wallet to authorities
3. Never cheat on tests

B2. Concluding Sentence: Therefore, because I give back change, turn in lost articles, and never cheat, people can remember me as being honest.

C1. Topic Sentence: Last, I would like people to remember me as being very hardworking.

1. Award from McDonald's
2. Award from Mervyn's
3. Chores at home

C2. Concluding Sentence: With all of these examples, is there any doubt that I am hard-working?

Step III. Concluding Paragraph-Topic Sentence: My actions reflect my personality traits.

1. I am a kind person who interacts well with others in various situations.
2. I am an honest person who tries not to take advantage of other people's mistakes.
3. I am a very hard-working person who enjoys work and often gets praised for it.

Concluding Sentence-The "so-what" or "soul" sentence: In order for several people to remember me the way I wish, I must live that way now.

Living As I Wish to be Remembered

Boy, I suck! No, I am just kidding. I am actually the exact opposite. I believe in treating others how they would

## CHAPTER 8

7

I like to be treated. I am not worried about being a cutthroat person. Upon my death in order for several people to remember me favorably, I shall be kind, honest, and hard-working.

First, I would like several people to remember me as being kind. I believe I am a kind person. I make a point to say hello to strangers. I never feel awkward doing this. I compliment people on their abilities. I always try to find something noteworthy about a person. I focus on a person's team spirit or a colorful shirt worn or a bright smile. I also try to accentuate the positive aspects of people. Instead of focusing on the fact that a person is unable to complete a portion of a project, I look at what the person has accomplished. For example, I comment on the part of a car painted rather than that part the person has not finished. I never look at the negative. Is it any wonder why I consider myself kind?

Next, I would like people to remember me as being honest. When shopping, I give back excess change if the cashier has made a mistake. I know and empathize with the difficulty of being a cashier. I turn in wallets or lost articles when I find them. If I lost my wallet, I would hope that someone would turn it in directly to the proper authorities. I also never cheat on tests. I believe in earning my grade. If I prepare for the test, I deserve a decent grade. If I do not prepare, I deserve a poor grade. I am a strong believer that one must face the consequences of her actions. Therefore, because I give back change, turn in lost articles, and never cheat, people can remember me as being honest.

Finally, I would like people to remember me as being very hard-working. I received an award from McDonald's for being a "top-notch" crew member. I was also selected to its "All-American Team," and I received a pin for my efforts. I also received an award from Mervyn's. I was selected as the store's most incredible new hire for the month of October. In addition to working, I also have chores to do at home. I clean the house thoroughly, washing the walls, scrubbing the floors, and cleaning the baths. My reward is a neat-looking home. With all of these examples, is there any doubt that I am hard-working?

My actions reflect my personality traits. After I am dead, if I want several persons to think of me fondly, I should be nice, truthful, and dedicated. I do not suck! I am a kind person who interacts well with others in various situations. I am an honest person who tries not to take advantage of other people's mistakes. I am a very hard-working person who enjoys work and often gets praised for it. In order for several people to remember me the way I wish, I must live that way now.

—Sarah Lovins

## GUIDELINES for INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH

Many writers can write interesting body paragraphs. However, they have difficulty starting and ending the theme. Yes, there are many ways you can start your papers. Your English instructor or tutor can show the many ways. This handbook will show you one way. If you follow these guidelines, you will do fine until your instructor/tutor gives you examples of the other ways. As a matter of fact, you will do fine if you never use another way. Still, a more polished writer should know how to vary his/her style of writing. That is why you should pursue your learning of how to write in a formal situation. Ok? Let's start.

Sentence 1: get the reader's attention

Sentence 2: give background information that will explain the reason for the thesis

Sentence 3: give more background information or definitions of terms used in the paper that the reader may not understand

Sentence 4: make a comment about one of the thesis points

Sentence 5: make a comment about another thesis point

Sentence 6: the thesis sentence-this sentence is NEVER a question; it gives an answer; it states an opinion

The author wants to emphasize that this is NOT THE ONLY way to develop an introductory paragraph. Once can do the following:

1. develop a short story (6-8 sentences) with the thesis at the end of the story; with the thesis at the end the main point/s of the paper will be clear
2. develop a four-sentence overview of what the paper will cover, allowing for the thesis to be the last sentence
3. develop a four to five-sentence fact-based paragraph that ends with a thesis focusing on those two or three fact-

## CHAPTER 8

9

points the paper will develop

4. some instructors are comfortable with only the thesis beginning the paper

5. some instructors are comfortable with no stated thesis; however, if you choose this method, you must be certain that you write the paper in such a way that the thesis, the main point/s you want the reader to grasp, are CLEARLY implied. If this does not occur, your paper will lack focus and imply you do not understand your subject matter. Unless you are a very accomplished writer, it is best ALWAYS to state the thesis in the first paragraph of your paper.

## GUIDELINES for the CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH

Sentence 1: write a good topic sentence.

Sentence 2: write the 3 ideas of the thesis with different words

Sentence 3: look at the introductory paragraph; write one sentence that relates to sentence 1 of the introductory paragraph

Sentence 4: summarize body paragraph 1

Sentence 5: summarize body paragraph 2

Sentence 6: summarize body paragraph 3

Sentence 7: tell the reader why you wrote the theme; when the reader finishes reading your theme, what do you want the reader to remember?? Whatever the answer is to this question; this should be the last sentence of the concluding paragraph.

NOTE: There are several different ways to set up the introductory and concluding paragraphs. Be sure to look at the pass-protected site. I would suggest for beginner writers they use the above as a guide until given formal training. The above, however, will suffice under various circumstances until taught other methods of development by trained individuals.

Some of the other methods for developing the concluding para-

graph are:

1. develop a short story ( 6 -8 sentences) that illustrates the main points presented in the paper; the last sentence should emphasize the points of the whole paper

2. develop a brief ( 4 - 5 sentences) summary of what the paragraphs of the theme have presented

3. develop a concluding paragraph that discusses the ramifications of the facts presented in the body of the paper, ending with a strong "call to action"

4. for those of you who choose to write a paper with no stated thesis, it will be very important that the concluding paragraph makes it very clear the purpose of the paper and what action, if any, you wish the reader to perform based on the content of the paper

Note: In some textbooks you see the terms "theme," "paper," or "essay." In most cases, these terms mean the same; and so, writers can use the terms interchangeably. Now, when one is working on his/her graduate final paper, this work is referred to as the "thesis." Then, a professor is referring to a work that is several paragraphs of research that a professor and committee have assigned a student. So, when "thesis" is used in this handbook, it is referring only to that sentence that clearly states the focus of a theme that is four to eight paragraphs.

The following contains the outline, the introductory paragraph, one body paragraph, and concluding paragraph of a theme to serve as another example:

#### Outline

Step I. Thesis Sentence: Zita is a romantic, goal-oriented, and committed person.

Step II. Body Paragraphs:

A1. Topic Sentence: First of all, she is a romantic.

1. candlelight dinners
2. surprise get-away weekends
3. surprise Christmas present

## CHAPTER 8

11

A2. Concluding Sentence: She is a romantic because she sets up special dinners, weekends, and presents

B1. Topic Sentence: Zita is, also, goal-oriented.

1. chairperson of committees
2. earning Ph.D.
3. conceiving child

B2. Concluding Sentence: Her being a chair, earning a doctorate, and conceiving a child are examples of her ability to focus.

C1. Topic Sentence: Finally, Zita is a person who believes in commitment..

1. friendship—tries to help asthmatic friend
2. daughter—tries not to embarrass parents
3. wife—tries to be supportive during challenging times

C2. Concluding Sentence: The way she tries to be a good friend, daughter, and wife shows her commitment.

Step III. Concluding Paragraph—Topic Sentence: Zita is a person made up of various characteristics.

1. She is a woman who likes to show romance.
2. She is a woman who sets long and short-range goals.
3. She is a woman who commits herself to people.

Concluding Sentence—"So-what" Sentence: Indeed, no individual is uni-dimensional; definitely, my friend is multi-dimensional because of her various roles.

Zita Cecilia Regis is a complex individual. People who know her say she is predictable and unpredictable. Every time they think they know what she will do, they do not. In the intimacy of her home, she tries avante-gardé things. Any person who knows her as a friend knows he or she can depend on her. Thus, Zita Cecilia Regis is a romantic, goal-oriented, and committed person.

First of all, she is a romantic. Her husband is never quite sure what she may do. While he is looking at TV, she may be dressing up in her pink, see-through negligee. Then, she serves him his favorite meal by candlelight. Next, she may

## PARAGRAPHS AND THEMES

plan a get-away trip to a hotel. He'll get home; she will have his clothes packed. Then, she may say, "Babe, we're leaving! Surprise!" The greatest expression of her romanticism is the time she gave her husband a surprise trip. This past Christmas she gave him a cruise to the Bahamas. Yes, my friend is a romantic because she gives special dinners, weekends, and presents.

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Zita is a person made up of various characteristics. She expresses love, purpose, and devotion. She is definitely a complex lady. She is a woman who likes to show romance. She is a woman who sets long and short-range goals. She is a woman who commits herself to people. Indeed, no individual is uni-dimensional; most definitely, my friend is multi-dimensional because of her various roles.

Of course, one of the most important sentences is the thesis sentence. Once you have this sentence in mind, it guides you in your development of all of the other paragraphs of the paper.

**A Suggestion**

Mr. Massie shared with the author at one of their conferences his method for getting his papers started. This occurs before following the guidelines for writing a quality introductory, body, and concluding paragraphs. Do you use a similar method?

**Paper Planning**

One method of forming a thesis—Example Column is to brainstorm!

**Example Column**

Space Travel  
rockets  
fuel  
history of space travel  
satellites  
space flights  
flight problems  
NASA

Next, after narrowing the topic, select one of the possibilities and form 3 points to include

Space Flights  
Sputnik  
Apollo 13  
Jupiter 1

CHAPTER 8

in the thesis (this may require more brainstorming).

Jupiter 2  
John Glenn  
Cosmonauts  
Mir  
Astronauts

Form thesis sentence:

Therefore, the world has gained a lot from the space travel of Glenn, the men of Apollo 13, and the astronauts on spaceship Mir.

SAMPLE PARAGRAPHS

Introductory and Concluding Paragraphs

Introductory and Concluding Paragraphs for "Sports Medicine"

It's all over!!! THERE IS NO HOPE!!! IT IS NOW THE END!!! These are thoughts some athletes may believe when they are injured on the playing field. Good news - -sports injuries do not always mean it is the end of playing. Although it can take much time and patience, therapeutic medicine is an alternative. Another type would be medicines for the treatment of common injuries which unlike therapeutic medicines may only take a few days to heal. Through sports medicines such as surgical medicine, therapeutic medicine, and the medicine for the treatment of common injuries, athletes can continue to play and enjoy sports and exercise.

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An injury from playing a sport or exercising does not

**PARAGRAPHS AND THEMES**

mean the end of enjoying those activities. The athlete can still enjoy and play sports after injuries because of surgical medicines, therapeutic medicines, and the medicines for the treatment of common injuries. It is not all over; there is always hope; it is never the end. Undergoing surgery gives injured athletes, in time, the ability to return to play sports. With a lot of time, patience, and self-discipline, athletes can continue to use muscles and remove pain through different kinds of therapies. With only a few weeks or even a few days, the treatment for common injuries can keep the athlete from sacrificing too much lost time out there on the field. Having knowledge of the different kinds of sports medicines that are available today can save the careers and/or even the lives of anyone who is active in any kind of sport or exercise.

—Diana Keller

**English 101****Thesis Sentence and Concluding Paragraph****Thesis Sentence and Concluding Paragraph of “Drinking and Driving”**

For drunk drivers, who may not recognize their possible impairment, prevention needs to come from the intervention of others, from various groups speaking to the issue of drunk driving, and from the alcohol producers themselves.

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## CHAPTER 8

15

Ultimately, the decision to drink and drive lies with the people who have been drinking and have the car keys in hand. People who intervene, groups who expound on not drinking and driving, and even the alcohol industry itself send clear messages to stop drinking and driving. People make uneducated decisions for the wrong reasons and wind up doing something tragically wrong. The people who have been drinking need to stop and listen to those around them who are saying that a drinker may not be capable of driving safely. The drinkers need to look more closely at the messages being sent via the media urging them to consider the consequences of driving drunk. The message sent by the alcohol industry says to drink responsibly to avoid making the wrong decision. When personal responsibility fails to keep the drunk driver off the road, society must intervene at various levels and become aggressively creative to prevent the repeat drunk driver from making yet another mistake.

—John Bienlein, English 101

Introductory and Concluding Paragraphs of “It’s Not Their Fault”

“Jack Sprat could eat no fat; his wife could eat no lean” (Mother Goose 40). These opening lines from a 17th century Mother Goose rhyme illustrates that differences between couples can be complimentary. Unfortunately, this does not hold

true in abusive relationships. The partners being battered, who in the overwhelming number of cases are women, suffer physical and emotional damage, which bewilders those outside their relationships. One result is that victimized females receive insensitive treatment from institutions. Besides institutional insensitivity, motives for remaining in abusive relationships, and methods of dealing with abuse are issues relevant to abused women.

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The problem of female abuse is ubiquitous. Insensitivity, ignorance, and limited means of dealing with their situation are issues deserving thoughtful consideration. Like Jack Sprat's wife, they often remain nameless, seen as able, but unwilling to remove themselves from desperate relationships, their problems left to stagnate in the backwaters of social ills. Some institutions exacerbate their complex problems. Society regards their eminently rational behavior with perplexity, failing to understand the fundamental causes. Changes in medical practices have helped, but more is needed. Unless the problems engulfing battered women are better understood and accepted by society, minimal improvement of their situation is the most that they can expect.

-Ronald Massie--English 101

## NARRATION AND ARGUMENTATION

Thus far, the author has shared with you examples of expository themes. However, many of you are used to writing short stories—narratives. It is very important that you understand the difference between narration and exposition and narration and argumentation.

The narratives included in this book should provide you with an adequate comparison. The first is fiction; the second is a combination of both.

Also, there are argumentative themes. They should provide clear examples of how you can develop this writing style. Also, an example of a complete argumentative theme is included. The third example of argumentation gives a complete illustration of how you may wish to set up this essay. Finally, there is a fourth argumentation theme that takes the same stand as the one before it. You should note that this writer uses very different reasons for her stand. After these works, this handbook will return to its main focus—exposition.

### NARRATION

#### The Man Who Became A Man

“ Please son... ”

“Ah ain’ yer son!” the boy fumed. “ Ah’ll shoot yuh ‘n it don’ be mah firs’ kill. ”

Final call came to board. The whistle blew. The boy stood indignant in the sunlight. To Seymour he still looked scared and pathetic despite his harsh words and drawn pistol.

The train began to move. There was a lot of track between Chicago and the next stop. It would be a long trip.

“My name’s Seymour.”

The boy looked up and slid his hand over towards his Wheeler pistol.

“If we are going to be traveling to the next stop together, we might as well know each other’s name.”

“Dave, “ the boy said, “ Dave Saunders.”

“Seymour Baker.” Seymour stuck his hand out and was greeted by the dark shadow hand of the seventeen year-old.

Dave began to tell his story. He told of his family and the gun and running off into the pitch black night. He talked of Mr. Hawkins and his job. “Ah’s a man,” he said, “Ah’m a live like one.”

“Well, Dave, that’s quite a tale. Where are you heading?”

“Don’ know.”

Me, I’m headed to California.”

With this Seymour began to tell Dave of his travels. He spoke of his job teaching at the boy’s school in New York, the stock market fall, losing his job, and being left with no money. He explained the letter from his sister Eileen telling of work on the family farm in California. He told of the deal he had made with Mr. Hobleman, the train’s engineer.

“And so, in trade for manual labor and some math and English lessons, I get to ride in here with the tobacco for free, all the way to California. At every stop, I get out, either move boxes or visit with Mr. Hobleman for a lesson or two, and get back on before the train leaves. On longer stops I go into town and do some odd jobs for money or food. It’s really quite a practical way to travel.”

The car fell silent once more.

“So, Dave, you say you’re a killer, huh?”

Quiet for awhile, deep in thought, finally, he looked up, his big white teeth grinning from ear to ear.

Talking ceased in the boxcar.

A day later the train was ready to move again. Seymour creaked open the door to his home, set the beef and tomatoes inside, and hoisted himself up.

“G’ mornin’, Mr. Baker.”

## CHAPTER 9

19

"Shit boy, not again."

"Ah got me four dollahs for all the work ah don'," Dave said. "Bought me a shirt, see..." he offered up an arm to which Seymour nodded. "Ah et good, too." Dave smiled. "Ah's gonna' show Ma 'n Pa ah's a man. Ah kin make my own."

Dave stood proud in the middle of the car, his white teeth showing to be harsh competition for the sun. "'N when Ah git 'nuff, ah's gonna' pay back da fifty dollah for killin' ol' Jenny."

Seymour looked up. "You're going to pay some poor girl's family fifty dollars as penance for taking her life."

Dave's laugh astounded Seymour. "Jenny's jis' an' ol' mule, Mistah Baker. Ah's jis' aimin' t' scare yuh."

Seymour realized that his trip would no longer be lonely.

"Mistah Baker?" Dave asked when the moon was high, "kin ah go to Calefornia wi' yuh?"

"Uh huh," Seymour answered in near sleep.

Many states came and went and the two became close friends. Seymour took to teaching Dave some reading and math, which he used to keep track of the money he saved for his Jenny debt. Dave learned a lot in the months that they traveled together. He proved to be quite an imaginative young man. He wrote stories that he would sneak into the car before Seymour returned. Dave often came home to find his friend already asleep with the story still locked in his hand. Things proved to be working out well. Seymour held Dave's many possessions for him, all except for the gun, which Dave insisted on keeping.

"Asides," he said, "Ah ain' got no bullets lef."

When they reached Nevada, the sun loomed above. Dave jumped off of the car and headed straight for town, waving goodbye. Seymour joined the rest of the work hands in their task of unloading box after box.

Dave returned to the car. He climbed in and reached in his pocket.

“Eight whole dollars. Add to my twenty-five I have...thirty-three!” Dave danced and let out a whoop of joy. He was so close to paying off his Jenny debt.

Suddenly the door slid open. “You best explain yourself ni—er.” The man stood glaring at Dave with wild red hair and perspiration streaking his ruddy face. “By the looks of ya’, ya’ ain’t got no ticket. Yer gonna’ have to come with me,” the red-haired man said.

Frantically Dave thought, if taken off of the train, he’d have nowhere to go. He had to get to California and prove that he was a man. He knew that he was a man...he had a gun.

He drew the left-handed Wheeler and stood pointing it at the the work hand.

The workhand laughed.

Seymour didn’t recognize the man standing just outside his boxcar smoking a cigarette.

“Help ya’?” the redhead asked.

“Just here to get some tobacco crates,” Seymour lied. He climbed into the car holding his breath.

“Lookout for that dead ni—er. Pulled a gun on me he did. Had to shoot him. Probably worthless anyway, never known a ni—er good enough to lick my boots. If ya’ want his overalls or something too bad, I already claimed ‘em. Besides, he’s my dead ni—er. If you want some new clothes, you go kill yourself one.”

California couldn’t come soon enough.

December 3, 1931

Dunham, California  
Baker Family Farm

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Saunders:

My name is Seymour Baker, and I knew your son Dave. We met on the train from Chicago to California. We became close friends. I helped teach your son to read and write, and he proved to have extraordinary imagination. He wrote fan-

## CHAPTER 9

21

tastic stories. He also became quite good at math. Dave worked hard and took pride in all he did. I was and still am proud to have met him.

There really is no kind, gentle way to tell you this, but know that Dave died proud and strong. He had worked hard to help pay you both back for the debt he had incurred over the death of Mr. Hawkins's mule. Enclosed please find the thirty-three dollars that he had earned and saved. Also, enclosed please find the great stories that Dave wrote. I think you will find that he possessed great talent.

In closing, let me express my great sorrow over Dave's death. I am sorry that I had to tell you of this in an impersonal letter. I will miss your son. Mr. and Mrs. Saunders, in a few months that I knew him, your son became a man.

With Extreme Sympathy,  
Seymour Baker

—Kim Hoogerhyde  
English 102

## My Sister Olivia

In the summer of 1898, my older brother, Robert, was home from college. My younger brothers, Joseph and Carl, were attempting to build a boat. They called it a boat, but there was very little resemblance. Joseph and Carl were only thirteen and eleven. What did they know? Me, I knew everything. After all I was eighteen. I was a man. Then, there was my sister, Olivia, and, in the summer of 1898, Olivia got engaged.

I had always been close to Olivia. True, we were close in age. There was only one year between us, but it was more than that. I liked her. Everyone liked Olivia. She was kind and didn't say much. Even as a child, though I was older, she would let me have my way. She was always trying to make others happy. She was always smiling her quiet, calm smile. As a young girl, she had only a few friends. She wasn't like the other girls in our school. She wasn't giggly or silly.

Olivia's beau was a local boy. His name was Jack. He worked at the sawmill and was very much like her. Quiet. Serious. They were together as much as father would allow. Jack would come and take supper with us a couple of times a

week. Later, he and Olivia would sit on the front porch while Joseph and Carl peeked through the curtains at them. On Sunday afternoons, they would picnic at the lake. Of course, someone always went along, usually me. Living in a small northern town left little else to do. We would lounge on that old blanket for hours to talk. We would even swim occasionally. Sometimes, I would walk down the shoreline and leave them to themselves.

It was during one of our afternoons at the lake that Jack mentioned he wanted to speak to me after he had walked Olivia home. I waited for him by the road in front of our house. He said it so casually I almost didn't hear him. He had syphilis. He didn't say where he had gotten it or how long he had known, and I didn't ask. I did, however, promise him I would say nothing until he decided what to do.

As in most small towns, anything interesting people will talk about it, and, eventually, the truth crept out. I assured Jack I had no part in it. Everyone seemed to be whispering, and, then, the worst—Father found out. He refused to allow Olivia to marry Jack. He refused to let her speak to him. I can still remember lying on my bed listening. Listening to Olivia cry and plead, I felt sick. I could do nothing for her. She was never the same girl after that day.

Jack died about four years later. They buried him with no headstone, only a post with a number. Olivia didn't go to the funeral, and she never mentioned him. I have many theories as to why, but only Olivia knows. She married less than a year later and had four children in the years that followed.

My sister Olivia is eighty-four now. Her husband died several months ago. Now, she is alone with an old lady's memories. Today, her daughter has taken her to buy a headstone—a headstone for Jack.

—Marla Marrs

English 101ia knows. She married less than a year later and had four children in the years that followed.

My sister Olivia is eighty-four now. Her husband died several months ago. Now, she is alone with an old lady's memories. Today, her daughter has taken her to buy a headstone—a headstone for Jack.

—Marla Marrs

## ARGUMENTATION

## Pro

## Children Killing

From 1985 to 1993, children arrested for murders increased one hundred fifty percent (France). The common face of a killer has become a child. In today's society children have become cold-blooded killers with very little punishment for their crimes. Due to the increase of child murderers, the government needs to take strong, swift action. The government should enforce trying children ages eight to sixteen as adults for murder because of the brutality of the crimes, their lack of fear of punishment, and the revolving door policy of the judicial system.

First, the government should legalize trying children ages eight to sixteen because of the brutality of their crimes. In recent years, brutality of children's crimes has become more dramatic. Three boys, six to eight years-old, beat an infant to death. The boys killed the infant because they wanted his tricycle (Toufexis). Opponents claim children are acting out what they see in their environment. Paul Mones, a defense attorney says "children who kill rarely have Ozzie and Harriet as parents" (Lamberg). In the case of a young Michigan girl who killed her parents, reportedly, her environment caused her actions. The girl shot and killed her parents because of excessive physical abuse of her and her siblings (Lamberg). Because of contradicting facts, this is not true. Children are not brutally killing because of their home life. On May 20, 1998, a fifteen-year-old shot his parents, and, then, went to school killing two more people, while injuring twenty-two more. During an interview, a friend of the family described his parents as "devoted parents in a tight-knit family" (Vaughn). Also, it has become apparent children murderers have started intertwining sexual abuse into their horrible crimes. On April 1998, authorities took three boys, ages seven to eleven, into custody for raping a three-year-old girl. The boys brutally clubbed the little girl and left her body in a creek bed. The Department of Justice reports rape arrest for children under the age of twelve has increased from 222 in 1980 to 553 in 1996 (Anin and Adler). The government must try children as adults because the brutality is motivated by greed, not motivated by their environment, and intertwined with sex.

Next, the government should try children as adults because they do not fear punishment. On December 1997,

Michael Carneal, a fourteen year-old, shot eight of his classmates. He was convicted of killing three of his peers. After ten months in juvenile detention, which Michael likes better than high school, he states " 'people respect me now' " (Blank). On the other hand, opponents say children do not have the mental capacity to understand the types of conditions they would have to endure in adult prisons. They say children placed in adult facilities are exposed to physical abuse. Also, the children are exposed to sexual abuse, which they do not expect as part of their punishment (Pruitt and Munoz). On the contrary, studies have shown they do comprehend the harshness of being placed in adult prisons, which prevents their criminal behaviors. During an interview, a child with a one to four-year sentence in juvenile detention says:

Easy, I'll just do my year and get out, it ain't nothing. But he advised his friend who continued his criminal activity to stop because he's 16 now, he'll go to jail. (Levitt)

Reports have shown that children do respond to harsher punishments (Levitt). Furthermore, children who commit murders have no hope for their future. Dr. Suzanne Tropez-Sims concludes after her research, " Kids are becoming more callous. They don't care if they die or live. They don't see a future for themselves" (France). When she asks kids where they see themselves in the future, they respond, "Oh dead" (France). The government should punish children who commit murders as adults because of their lack of response to punishments, their callousness, and their poor outlook for their future.

Finally, the government should legalize trying children ages eight to sixteen as adults because of the revolving door policy. Currently, a child can only be punished for murder until the age of twenty-one. For example, two boys, ages seven and eight charged with murder of an eleven year-old, must be set free by the age of twenty-one. This is not fair punishment since the young girl has no time left while the boys have a whole life ahead of them (Chicago Boys 7 & 8). Opponents disagree. They say that children tried in the adult system are not being punished at all. A preliminary study done by the State Department of Juvenile Justice System reports most children get probation in adult courts. The courts consider these their first offenses (Pan). Proponents of trying children as adults are skeptical of this report. Proponents say in adult courts the children would be sentenced within the law. If the crime were murder, it would not matter if it were a first-time

offense. The child would not receive probation (Teen Crime: More and More). Also, the juvenile system releases with no records children who commit murders. This policy of sealed records enforces a revolving door policy because their prior crimes are not considered in their next sentencing. Because of this policy, kids are in and out of the juvenile system. When they do commit crimes as adults, it is only their first offense (La Velle). Children must be tried as adults because it is fair, they deserve harsher punishment, and the sealed record policy lets them off easier for future crimes.

The government must try these children as adults. Their crimes are becoming increasingly more brutal; they do not fear current punishments, and they are in and out of the justice system. The Justice Department reports by the year 2010 the juveniles arrested for murders will increase tremendously. The government must prevent this with harsher punishments by trying them as adults. It is the government's responsibility to protect the society from these young predators.

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—Tiffany Daniels  
English 102

NOTE: The MLA Style requires doublespacing for the Works Cited page. However, to conserve space, some of the works cited pages in this handbook are single-spaced.

Con

### Save Our Children

Today's children are faced with many challenges that have gotten worse as time has gone by. The "good old days" did not face children with the type of violence seen today. The government wants to punish America's children too harshly for the crimes they commit. Recently, there has been a change in America's judicial system adding new authority to the courts. Now, it is possible for children ages eight to sixteen to be tried as adults in a court of law. The government should not try children as adults because most of the children are non-violent offenders, the conditions in adult jails are too harsh, and juvenile facilities are more successful at healing the children.

The number of juveniles arrested for violent offenses is minimal. First, there is the shocking fact that the number of juveniles arrested for violent crimes is getting smaller and smaller as time goes by. 94 percent of the children commit non-violent offenses, yet the number of children tried in the adult courts is on the rise (Juvenile Justice Awry). Children should receive punishments to fit the crimes they commit. Likewise, America's children should not receive punishments fit for adults. Opponents will say, however, that the number of juveniles committing offenses such as murder is on the rise. "Unfortunately, there is a small group of juvenile offenders who are as hardened as any adult criminal...In 1990 more than a third of all murders in this country were committed by individuals under the age of 21" (Juvenile Crime). Still, these hardened criminals are children. They should be treated as children, not as adults. Next, "...the number of children younger than 10 charged with murder is tiny, and not growing noticeably... There were only 17 in 1996, and the average for the preceding decade was 13" (Annin & Adler). The juvenile justice system is doing a fine job of deterring crime among juveniles. Punishing children as adults destroys all the protections that the juvenile justice system provides. Lastly, the S.10 bill's provisions are based unnecessarily on fear. This fear causes a rapid increase in the number of children tried as adults. However, most of America's children are arrested for acts such as vandalism and shoplifting (We Need to Heal). These children are committing childish offenses and need to be punished accordingly. Is it really the answer to try these children as adults, or is it merely a quick fix to a problem that has taken years to form?

Next, the government should not try children as adults

because the conditions in the adult jails and prison are too harsh. Many children as young as twelve in such institutions are found to be raped, beaten, and left alone for days. As a result, some children are even attempting suicide. Furthermore, most of these children are arrested for non-violent crimes (Adult Jails and Prisons). The Reverend Jesse Jackson disagrees. He says that for most of these youthful offenders, jail is a step-up. He also believes that they get the benefits of organized recreation and quality medical care (LaVelle). However, substantial evidence states otherwise.

According to recent studies, juveniles serving time in county jails and adult prisons are five times more likely to commit suicide than those who are left in the juvenile system. They are also twice as likely to be beaten by staff and 50 percent more likely to be attacked with a weapon. Moreover, they are 30 percent more likely to commit another crime once they are let out of prison. (Reitman)

In addition, the juvenile justice system's mission is to protect children from these conditions (Shepherd). The juvenile justice system should continue to provide protection for these children. It is not the answer to send them to adult facilities. In conclusion, if children are subjected to these awful conditions, the prospect of becoming better is limited (Anin & Adler). The juvenile justice system is doing a fine job of deterring crime among juveniles. Punishing children as adults destroys all the protections that the juvenile justice system provides. Lastly, the S.10 bill's provisions are based unnecessarily on fear. This fear causes a rapid increase in the number of children tried as adults. However, most of America's children are arrested for acts such as vandalism and shoplifting (We Need to Heal). These children are committing childish offenses and need to be punished accordingly. Again, is it really the answer to try these children as adults, or is it merely a quick fix to a problem that has taken years to form?

Lastly, the juvenile justice system has a higher success rate of healing children. The adult courts often let the little criminals slip through the system. This is due to the fact that many of these children are considered first-time offenders in the adult courts. Some teens even believe that they will be treated more leniently in the adult court of law (Pan). However, opponents will argue that the juvenile justice system continually gives some offenders a "slap on the wrist."

## CHAPTER 9

29

No one sees to it that they quit committing small crimes such as schoolyard fights and truancy. As a result, they are turned loose again with not much of a punishment at all (Humes). Others say that the juvenile justice system is doing a better job of deterring crime than the adult system. Studies in Florida, New York, and New Jersey say that the teens that are sent through the adult courts are more likely to commit another crime. These troubled kids need more attention than the adult jails and prisons can give them (Teen Crime). Furthermore, the damage that is done to young teens only leads to more problems down the road.

Exposure to and cohabitation with adult criminals often leads juveniles to more serious anti-social behavior upon their release from incarceration. A much better response to addressing the reasons for the violence would be to incorporate supporting preventive intervention policies in the juvenile correctional system (AACAP/APA).

In conclusion, being tried in the adult court comes with consequences such as more lenience, more crime, and more behavioral problems than in the juvenile court.

The government simply does not know what to do with these little criminals. Non-violent offenders that are thrown into harsh adult jails and prisons are missing out on the abilities of the juvenile justice system to rehabilitate them. If these children were born in the more simple times, they would be sent to the juvenile detention center and receive one-on-one attention from individuals trained to rehabilitate them. If a child commits a crime such as shoplifting, that child should not be tried as an adult. If that child were tried as an adult, he/she would be subjected to harsh conditions that are hard even for an adult to endure. Furthermore, putting children in the adult system leads them to a more serious life of crime. The government should not try children as adults because the end result is unthinkable.

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—Jackie Haley  
English 102

Both Pro and Con themes present adequate argumentation. It is important that you understand that it is not the stand you take but how well you present the stand. Most instructors are objective and reasonable. They are able to put aside their personal feelings if they do not agree with your stand. However, no instructor or any other reasonable individual can agree with your argument if it is not a well-thought out, researched, and organized presentation. When you take your advanced writing courses or work with a tutor, you should go into more detail about this challenging form of discourse.

There are several ways of setting up the body paragraphs for an argumentative theme. One way which is quite effective (both samples follow this format) is:

1. topic sentence
2. 1st example of support of the topic sentence
3. opposing viewpoint
4. 2nd example of support and refutation of the opposing viewpoint
5. 3rd example of support
6. concluding sentence

On the next page is a full outline of the argumentative work that follows it. Only the second body paragraph is included. This excerpt should serve as another example of argumentation. Furthermore, you can see how the outline format serves as a guide for developing the body of the work. Note that the opposing viewpoint is in capital letters. Then, to demonstrate the transition back to the 2nd support of the topic sentence, the 2nd example of support is underlined.

Step 1.       Thesis Sentence: The government should abolish capital punishment because of the chance of error, the failure to deter crime, and the degrading of human life.

**NARRATION & ARGUMENTATION****Step II. Body Paragraphs:**

- A1. Topic Sentence:** The possibility of error makes capital punishment unacceptable.
1. Death is irreversible
  2. Opposing viewpoint
  3. Rebuttal—74 cases of errors
  4. No safeguards can prevent convicting an innocent person.
- A2. Concluding Sentence:** The danger of a mistake justifies abolishing capital punishment because death is irreversible, errors are documented, and no safeguards can prevent an error.
- B1. Topic Sentence:** Capital punishment is not an effective deterrent to murder.
1. Person does not expect to be caught
  2. Opposing viewpoint
  3. Rebuttal—Homicides lower in cap. states
  4. Life imprisonment is just as effective
- B2. Concluding Sentence:** Deterrence is ineffective because a murderer does not expect to be caught, capital punishment states are not free from murder, and life imprisonment is sufficient.
- C1. Topic Sentence:** Capital punishment destroys belief in the inherent worth of human life.
1. Cruel and unusual punishment
  2. Opposing viewpoint
  3. Cannot bring life back
  4. Decay of the condemned man
- C2. Concluding Sentence:** Cruel and unusual punishment, inability to restore victim's life, and the indecent decay of the condemned are dehumanizing effects of the death penalty.

- Step III. **Concluding Paragraph—Topic Sentence:** The number one reason why society should abolish capital punishment is it is wrong for anyone to kill.
1. An innocent person wrongfully executed is intolerable.
  2. Death is no more a deterrent to the commission of crimes than are other alternate, more acceptable punishments.
  3. The ultimate result of the death penalty is a total disregard for human life and dignity.

### Body Paragraph 2

Capital punishment is not an effective deterrent to murder. The fear of the punishment is least likely to be present during the crime of murder. The murder committed in a fit of passion or anger is over and done with before the person realizes what s/he did. In the same sense, a carefully and premeditated crime of murder does not act as a deterrent because this murderer does not expect the legal community to discover or punish him/her (McClellan 20). Proponents of capital punishment share a view regarding deterrence vividly expressed by Hyman Barshay.

The death penalty is a warning, just like a lighthouse throwing its beams out to sea. We hear about shipwrecks, but we do not hear about the ships the lighthouse guides safely on their way. We do not have proof of the number of ships it saves, but we do not tear the lighthouse down. (Carrington 13)

OPPONENTS CLAIM, HOWEVER, THAT IF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT WERE A REAL DETERRENT TO CRIME, THEN, THE STATES WITH CAPITAL PUNISHMENT WOULD BE RELATIVELY FREE FROM MURDER Actually, the opposite is true. The homicide rate is lower in the states without the death penalty (Reid 487). Also, the death penalty is unnecessary because punishment sufficient to deter is just and no more. A life sentence in prison will serve the deterrent purpose at least as well as capital punishment (Van Den Haag & Conrad 293). Deterrence is ineffective because a murderer does not expect to be caught, capital punishment states are not free from murder, and life imprisonment is just as sufficient.

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—Karen Driskell  
 English 101

## Government Killing

Over the years society has embraced the government with willingness and gratitude. We as the people have been able to voice concerns, and we expect those concerns to be addressed in a realistic and reasonable fashion. Although many issues in our legal system resulted through rough debate, such as who will be fit for presidency, the steps in finding the truths we are told by our government are incredibly flawed. Everyone feeds on the need to feel safe and secure in our environment. Laws have been passed to protect citizens against heinous crimes. These laws were built off the American Constitution to ensure our positive and historical background continues to prosper into the future. However, as time passes the ways of the world progressively change. This alters the views we've encountered in previous years due to the changing times in our economy. This inevitable and obvious change has led to a highly controversial debate on whether capital punishment fails to meet the guidelines set by our Constitution. Executions should be a part of the past and a stepping stone into a brighter future. Instead, it is still legal in parts of the United States. There are several reasons to re-evaluate the legality and morality of the death penalty. U.S.

## CHAPTER 9

35

Congress should abolish the death penalty because of ineffective legal representation, the risk of wrongful convictions, and its destructiveness toward civil liberties.

First, the government should ban the death penalty because of inadequate defense counsel. State-appointed defense lawyers are inexperienced and underpaid (Acker). Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun expressed similar concerns in 1994.

“When we execute a capital defendant in this country, we rely on the belief that the individual was guilty, and was convicted and sentenced after a fair trial, to justify the imposition of state-sponsored killing.... My 24 years of overseeing the imposition of the death penalty from this court have left me in grave doubt whether the constitutional requirement of competent, experienced, well-funded legal counsel for capital defendants is being fulfilled” (Baldus).

In most states, poor legal representation results from official policies. The states pay no more than a pittance to help lawyers defend their clients, and none requires that well-trained attorneys handle death cases (Henderson). Opposing viewers claim that the American Bar Association (ABA) has worked hard to administer fair and just proceedings of capital punishment. They created new policies which require Congress to provide funding for defender organizations, and also to have two lawyers with specific professional credentials, experience, and skills for clients during death penalty trials (Coyle). Regrettably, neither of these recommendations has been properly enforced. “Congress has ended funding to state-appointed defenders, ABA policies haven't been fully embraced by any state, and instead they moved towards the victimization of poor defendants” (Klein). Poor people accused of capital crimes are often defended by lawyers who lack the skills, resources, and commitment to handle such serious matters. Inadequate counsel is almost always a result of poverty. This fact is confirmed in case after case (Bright). In addition, the amounts of time state-assigned lawyers dedicate to their clients are slim to none due to their overwhelming caseloads. Timothy K. Lewis, who served a decade on the Federal Appeals Court in Philadelphia, claimed that giving adequate and equal representation to those who can't afford a lawyer was impossible because “most public defenders carry staggering caseloads” (Los Angeles Times). In capital cases an attorney may mean the difference between life and death. Executing people because of who their attorney was instead of the crime itself is discriminative and should promote great reasoning to abolish the death penalty.

In addition, the death penalty should not be tolerated because the risks of wrongful convictions are inexcusable. Possible errors are irreversible. Since the death penalty was reinstated in the United States in 1976, 122 people in 22 states have been released from death row for wrongful convictions. People put to death in several other cases were found to be not guilty after their execution (Flanders). Belated exoneration does a dead person no good. Death penalty supporters contend that the release of so many innocent people from death row is evidence that "the system works," and that it prevents irreversible mistakes from being made (Emmit). They also say the finding of so many errors in the appeals process "shows that there is an extra level of vigilance and caution in death penalty cases" (Butterfield). Nothing could be further from the truth. A national study done in 1991 by Senator Joseph F. Biden Jr., Democrat of Delaware and Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, concluded that "wrongful convictions were indeed taking place, and the lengthy review process in capital crimes raised tremendous errors, most of which began with police, that in no shape or form could be justified" (Swedlow). Wrongful convictions often occur from misconduct beginning with police. Questioning a suspect can be as subtle as an implied threat for failing to cooperate, or as overt as the beating of Rodney King (Rosenblatt). The police develop a theory of the crime, search evidence, and question suspects that fit their theory's criteria. Soon after arresting a suspect, they proceed as if they are already guilty. This intimidation, sometimes lasting hours and days, puts the suspect under great pressure and usually results in falsified confessions for the promise of leniency (Dorf). Furthermore, suppression of evidence by the prosecution also influences wrongful convictions. Since 1973, more than 125 people have been released from death row throughout the country due to withheld evidence by prosecution that otherwise would've sacrificed their false convictions. In 2003 alone, 10 wrongfully convicted defendants were released from death row because of withheld evidence (Amnesty International USA). Wrongful convictions of the death penalty are intolerable because of irreversible errors, police misconduct, and the suppression of evidence by the prosecution.

Lastly, Congress should abolish the death penalty because of its destructiveness toward civil liberties. The death penalty violates several Amendments, including the Eighth and Fourteenth. In 1972, in *Furman v. Georgia*, the Supreme Court invalidated hundreds of scheduled executions, declaring that the existing state laws were applied in an

## CHAPTER 9

37

"arbitrary and capricious" manner and, thus, violated the Eighth Amendment's prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment. They also claimed it was a violation to the Fourteenth Amendment's guarantees of equal protection of the laws and due process (Lewis). However, in 1976, in *Gregg v. Georgia*, the Court resuscitated the death penalty. It ruled that the penalty "does not invariably violate the Constitution" if administered in a manner designed to guard against arbitrariness and discrimination. They also stated that the terms "cruel and unusual" taken together suggest that punishments should be proportionate to the crime that was committed (Bork). On the contrary, the meaning of the Eighth Amendment can and does evolve over time because society's views of "cruel and unusual punishment" have changed, and therefore is considered a violation of our constitution in present times, not to mention a violation of our civil rights (Dworkin). Death row inmates are stripped of civil rights that include life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The majority of inmates on death row wait for appeals to take place, which are lengthy processes that may take years of review. They are separated from the general population of the prison and filled with mental anxiety because they have no idea when exactly they will be put to death (Lewis). Next, capital punishment is nothing more than a re-enactment of the original criminal offense; in short, legalized murder. John F. Russo, a former State Senate President and Democrat, stated that the problem was not in the law but in "liberal judges and other individuals who have consistently disregarded the legislative will and refused to enforce the law as written" (Dolhenty). Capital punishment should be banned because it's a violation of several amendments, it strips away inmate rights to pursue happiness and life, and the legality of government murder is hypocritical.

In conclusion, capital punishment is a barbaric remnant of uncivilized society. It is immoral in principle, and unfair and discriminatory in practice. Heated public debate has centered on questions of sentencing equality, executions of the innocents, and the multiple violations of the American Constitution. Whether or not the defendant is truly guilty or not, killing is wrong whether it is done by civilians or by government. Different avenues need to be evaluated and enforced to disable the death penalty. The United States Congress needs to abolish capital punishment now.

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## CHAPTER 9

39

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English 102