

## Sample Definition Essay

### What is This Thing Called Love?

A wise man once said that love is a wonderful thing. Although this statement leaves sparse room for argument, it does little to define what love is beyond the vague realm of wonderful. It is my duty as a devout romantic to embark upon the seemingly difficult task of defining love by looking at the history, explaining what love is not, and examining the uses of love and the results of that usage.

#### (Origin and Causes)

The origin of the word is probably the most logical place to start. As with many words in the English language, love is a derivative of the Latin word "causamajoraprobemus" which means "You're miserable when you got it and miserable when you don't." The word was created to explain the biological phenomenon that existed when certain individuals came into contact with each other and either remained together or went about their lives separately. Regardless of the outcome, the relationship was usually characteristic of throat lumps, knotted stomachs, weak knees, temporary loss of language, sweaty palms, dizziness, sneezing, and occasional nausea. Belligerent insanity also resulted. History clearly illustrates this. Can we ever forget the face that launched a thousand ships? Federally expressing Van Gogh's ear? The construction of Le Tour Eiffel? All of these were results of love and love lost.

#### (Negation)

Star-crossed lovers have stated that love is not hand nor foot nor any part belonging to a man. Matrimonial ceremonies also claim that love is not jealous or boastful. Let it be stated here that love also is not a gourmet dish, a domesticated animal, or a latest trend. Love is not a strategic defense mechanism nor the best kept secret at the Pentagon. Love is not another seasoning to bottle and stick on the dust-lined shelves of the spice rack. Love is not to be confused with adhesive tape.

Instead, love is a great counterpart to late, evening thunder storms on hot July nights. Love goes well with cold pizza on picnic blankets. Love is cold, wet sand between bare toes. Love is a capitalistic sell-all for novels, Top-40 pop songs, summer movies, and greeting cards.

In its simplest terms, love is a four-letter word. Much like other words of similar letter make

up, when expressed it can evoke laughter, pleasure, pain, anger, and virtually any wave of reaction. Love also can be confused with feelings of indigestion and gas. Houses have been built, burned, and banished because of love.

### The Real Meaning of Honesty

I think it was my mother who taught me the meaning of honesty. Not because she actually was honest, but because she lied all the time. She felt that the easiest way out of any given situation was generally the best way out. And, for her, that generally meant telling a "little white lie." As a young child I thought it was kind of cool. And, naturally, when I would come to her with a concern or question wondering what I should do, she generally advised me to lie.

"Mom, I told Theresa that I would go over to her house, but now I would rather go to Sue's house to play."

"Tell Theresa you're sick," she would advise. And generally I did. But I didn't seem blessed with her lack of conscience. On many painful occasions Theresa would find out that I really went to Sue's house without her. These occasions taught me that it is more painful to be caught in a lie than it is to tell the truth in the first place. I wondered how it was possible that my mother had never learned that lesson.

I started thinking of all the lies that I'd heard her tell. I remembered the time she told someone that her favorite restaurant had closed, because she didn't want to see them there anymore. Or the time she told Dad that she loved the lawn mower he gave her for her birthday. Or when she claimed that our phone lines had been down when she was trying to explain why she hadn't been in touch with a friend of hers for weeks. And what bothered me even more were all the times she had incorporated me into her lies. Like the time she told my guidance counselor that I had to miss school for exploratory surgery, when she really needed me to baby-sit. And it even started to bother me when someone would call for her and she would ask me to tell them that she wasn't there.

So, I started my own personal fight against her dishonesty. When I answered the phone and it was someone my mother didn't want to talk to, I said, "Louise, mom is here, but she doesn't want to talk to you." The first time I did it, I think she grounded me, but I

refused to apologize. I told her that I had decided that it was wrong to lie. And the next time it happened I did the same thing. Finally, she approached me and said, "I agree that lying is not the best thing to do, but we need to find a way to be honest without being rude." She admitted that her methods weren't right, and I admitted that mine were a bit too extreme.

Over the past few years, the two of us have worked together to be honest- and yet kind. Honesty should mean more than not lying. It should mean speaking the truth in kindness. Though I started by trying to teach my mom the importance of honesty, I ended up gaining a deeper understanding of the meaning of the term.