

Three "Satisfactory" Essays

Essay #7 Score: 4

Clyde Kluckhohn explains the differences and similarities among the world's peoples through the many cultures that arise out of human nature. Kluckhohn defines a culture to be inclusive of every aspect of a human being's life. This culture guides people's actions and feeling toward numerous things. Kluckhohn states specifically, "Each specific culture constitutes a kind of blueprint of all life's activities."

Kluckhohn uses three examples to illustrate how the culture in which a person is raised shapes a person's attitudes, actions and thought. The first example Kluckhohn uses shows the different attitudes women have about bigamy. Women from Siberia have been raised in a culture with very different ideas than our American culture. For this reason, Koryak women desire the companionship of another female and cannot know how any woman could "restrict her husband to just one mate." In Kluckhohn's second example he shows how a culture develops physical characteristics in a person. The boy mentioned, although biologically American, acquired characteristics that gave him the appearance and mannerisms of a Chinese. The third example Kluckhohn uses displays the biological effect culture can have upon a person. These individuals who were tricked into eating rattlesnake meat had severe violent reaction when told due to their cultural upbringing. Hence, when a cultural standard is broken even a biological response such as vomiting will sometimes occur.

Although I agree partially to Kluckhohn's explanation of the differences and similarities among the world's people, I feel that not only are people a product of their environment and upbringing, but are also influenced by hereditary factors as well. Many experiments have been conducted that show a definite relationship between related persons. Children often have similar behavior when compared to their parent's behavior as children. Also, children of alcoholics have a fifty percent chance of becoming an alcoholic themselves. This fact can be explained by the theory that these children have inherited characteristics making them susceptible to alcoholism. Furthermore, experiments have been conducted where twins have been separated at birth and raised by two different families. Even though these twins were raised in two different variations of American culture, when tested they reacted almost identically to certain situations and had similar feelings towards universal concepts.

In conclusion, Kluckhohn's explanation which denotes cultures as the "blueprints" of life's activities is quite acceptable. One must consider, however, hereditary factors when attempting to completely interpret human behavior.

COMMENT: *Essay #7 provides a satisfactory response to Kluckhohn's ideas about culture's influence by emphasizing the importance of heredity as another influence on human behavior. The first paragraph reports Kluckhohn's idea; the second explains how his examples demonstrate culture's influence; the third*

states general agreement with Kluckhohn's claims, but cites several "experiments" to show that heredity's effect on behavior has also been established; the fourth restates the writer's acceptance of — and addition to — Kluckhohn's ideas. Throughout, the essay tends to summarize quickly rather than develop fully, but its examples and reasoning are adequate to its purpose.

The prose of this essay is generally acceptable. The writer sometimes falls into misstatement or imprecision: "explains the differences and similarities among the world's peoples through the many cultures that arise out of human nature," (paragraph 1); "a definite relationship between related persons," (paragraph 3). There is a sprinkling of errors: Kluckholn (throughout); "agree to Kluckholn's explanation" (paragraph 3); "exceptable" (paragraph 4). Parallelism fails occasionally ("people's actions and feeling," paragraph 1). More frequently, the sentences show the competence demonstrated by, for example, the first and last sentences of paragraph two. As a whole, this essay shows satisfactory preparation for University writing.

Essay # 8 Score: 4

In the given passage from *Mirror for Man*, Clyde Kluckhorn explains the similarities and differences between cultures by first defining the anthropological concept of "culture" and then explaining his definition.

The definition Kluckhorn gives relies heavily on common sense. Culture is: "the total life way of a people, the social legacy individuals acquire from their group. Or culture can be regarded as that part of the environment that is the creation of human beings."

By giving us this definition, Kluckhorn immediately deletes any chance of misinterpreting the word and concept of culture.

Kluckhorn starts his explanation of this definition by simplifying the concept. He says that a person's acts cannot be explained merely in terms of biology, the life experiences of that person, and/or the immediate situation. Instead "the past experience of other people in the form of culture enters into almost every event". It is not we who determine our culture, but our ancestors who determined for us.

Kluckhorn is saying that who we are — our culture — is based on how the people who have the responsibility of raising us were raised by their role models, who were influenced by their role models, and so on.

To illustrate his point, Kluckhorn gives examples of times when the culture someone was raised in plays a major role in determining how the person will react in a given situation — often how they will react to an aspect of another culture. The examples all showed that one's own culture is where one feels safest. Kluckhorn's illustrations of how people react negatively to other cultures seems to prove the axiom that man's biggest fear is of change.

Despite the almost overwhelming influences of culture, there is still human nature to consider. Basically, all human beings are the same. All are similar in biology and in that they must observe the physical laws of nature. Yet the differences between cultures stem from the once original, individual ways of dealing with these problems. Man and his problems are universally the same, but it is his dealing with these problems that is different, and these dealings are determined by the predecessors of each culture. This is the very essence of how Kluckhohn explains the anthropological differences and similarities between cultures.

As for my views, I agree with Professor Kluckhohn wholeheartedly although all of my experience has been in the American culture with various subcultures. Despite this difference, the same rules concerning similarities and differences seem to apply.

I recently moved from a large, private high school in an eastern metropolitan area to a small public school in a secluded rural area on the West Coast. Indeed the differences were astounding. Gone were my chances of going to the theatre once or twice a month. Gone was the ability to get on a bus and shop for my every need in a five mile radius. Gone was my selection of first run movies. The latest songs are only attainable by driving an hour to a store or praying that the cable hooked up to your stereo is working.

Despite the radical differences, the kids I go to school with are surprisingly similar. The main concern was still acceptance. Everybody still looked for a good time on the weekends. Teenagers still had to deal with the problems of identity and sexuality. Yet it was the ways in which they dealt with these problems that created the greatest, and often as an outsider trying to join in, the most shocking.

Partying was the main outlet for fun and drinking was not accepted but expected. To deal with the problem of more aesthetic entertainment, teens bought tapes of the favorite groups by the armloads and rented their favorite movies and watched them on the VCR. The problems were the same, but how they dealt with those problems differed. I asked a lot of questions and found out my new home had always been like this. Traditions had been passed down and behaviors were expected to fall into the same pattern. This, once again, illustrates Kluckhohn's theory.

As a final note, is it not this universality that makes good literature good? Can not modern teenagers identify with Romeo and Juliet, Huckleberry Finn, or Odysseus? The similarity of man not only transcends the problem of place, but also that of time.

COMMENT: Like Essays #5 and #7, Essay #8 discusses Kluckhohn's rhetorical strategies in some detail. Paragraphs one through five show how Kluckhohn defines culture, explains its transmission through "role models," and shows its influence in action. Paragraph six summarizes his ideas about the

relative influences of culture and biology. Paragraphs seven through ten then draw on the writer's experience to show how the needs of adolescence and local mores create similarities and differences between the student bodies of two high schools the writer has attended. To introduce this discussion, in paragraph seven the writer notes that Kluckhohn's distinction applies to subcultures as much as cultures; this application of Kluckhohn's idea shows that the writer understands the passage and can apply Kluckhohn's ideas to areas of the writer's own experience that Kluckhohn does not explicitly mention.

As a whole, the essay shows a reasonable understanding of Kluckhohn's ideas and applies those ideas to the author's experience sensibly. Nevertheless, it sometimes reports or exemplifies Kluckhohn's ideas in ways that are not fully satisfactory: in paragraph three, for example, Kluckhohn is not "simplifying" the concept of culture; in paragraph nine, the "surprisingly similar" characteristics of the teenagers in the western high school are not all very convincingly tied to biology rather than to generally-shared American culture. At times, too — most prominently in the statements about fear of change at the end of paragraph five and about the "universality" of literature in the final paragraph — the essay drifts off to observations not integrated into its central development. In spite of these flaws, however, the essay analyzes and responds to Kluckhohn adequately.

The prose of this essay is serviceable rather than sophisticated. It uses coherence devices competently and at least once consciously patterns sentences to reinforce meaning (see the series of sentences beginning "Gone" in paragraph eight). Though there are occasional instances of awkward phrasing ("deletes any chance," paragraph 2) and syntax ("Man and his problems are universally the same, but it is his dealing with these problems that is different," paragraph 6), as a whole Essay #8 meets the Subject A standard of competence.

Essay #9 Score: 4

"What constitutes culture?" is a controversial question to which many anthropologist must respond. Culture, as defined by Clyde Kluckhohn, is human nature, the way of life of a people. Each culture differs from the rest because it deals with a different people in a different social environment. Each is defined by generations of ancestors who have set the boundaries of social custom.

I agree with Kluckhohn's view that culture is the result of an individual's upbringing, for I have had the experience of being exposed to two vastly different cultures. When I immigrated to the United States from Vietnam in 1975, I was caught in the midst of two vastly different worlds - the strict, rigid social ideals of my Oriental background, and the carefree, relaxed American lifestyle. Somehow, I must try to achieve a balance of these two worlds.

The American culture was at first an enigma to me. I was just an observer on the edge, looking in. I was intimidated by these Americans who were so forward and outspoken, who were so uninhibited in their speech and action. Contrasted

to this is my strict upbringing, which greatly emphasized the "virtues" of meekness and quiescence. I was aghast at the relationship between American children and adults, who converse and interact with each others as friends and equals; I was always expected to respect my elders, to only listen and obey. These differences in American and Vietnamese cultures were not predestined by God, nor do they arise from biological or environmental differences. They result from different ideas and values, different social legacies each group has inherited from its people.

The past twelve years in the United States have radically changed my life, for time has redefined the way I think, feel, and behave. I am no longer hovering on the edge, for I am now an American who has adapted American customs and the American way of life. Yet I still retain Oriental customs and values that have been instilled in me in early childhood. These two cultures have permanently become a part of my self. I am a product of the American and Vietnamese cultures, for I have been brought up by these two peoples.

COMMENT: *Essay #9 falters at the start. In explaining Kluckhohn's ideas about what causes the similarities and differences among the world's peoples, this essay misreports Kluckhohn by saying that he defines culture as "human nature" — precisely the opposite of what Kluckhohn says. The essay recovers in the next two sentences, which emphasize the importance of tradition in setting "the boundaries of social custom." By discussing the author's experience in the American and Vietnamese cultures, it goes on to show clearly that the author really does understand Kluckhohn's ideas, even if biologically caused similarities are never explicitly mentioned. The discussion of the differences between American and Vietnamese cultures echoes Kluckhohn by emphasizing how they are shaped by "different ideas and values," and the behavioral details the author selects to show the influence of those different values are both evocative and neatly contrasted. The final paragraph, though it raises questions about what "Oriental values and customs" the author has held on to, resolves that opposition in a way that extends Kluckhohn without contradicting him.*

The prose of this essay is syntactically sophisticated, particularly in its use of parallel structure, and occasionally shows an ability of think in terms of rhetorical pattern (the repetition of "on the edge" in paragraphs 3 and 4). Its choice of words is often apt. There are errors: "many anthropologist," beginning paragraph one; "I must try" (rather than "I had to try"), end paragraph two; "Contrasted . . . is" (rather than "was"), paragraph three. While native speakers of English might have controlled these features, the errors do not distract the reader significantly. In all, this essay shows a sophisticated command of written English and adequate preparation for University writing.