

ENG 101 Spring 2015 Essay #1 about the
“Super-Replicators” section in Daniel Gilbert’s article “Reporting Live from Tomorrow”

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” (Thomas Jefferson, *The Declaration of Independence*, July 4, 1776)

ESSAY ASSIGNMENT. In a country whose founding document includes “the pursuit of Happiness” together with life and liberty among our “unalienable Rights,” it becomes important to discuss what happiness is and what it means to “pursue happiness.” In the “Super-Replicator” section of his article “Reporting Live from Tomorrow,” Daniel Gilbert reports on research that shows that money and children do not really make people happy. This *contradicts* most societies’ “cultural wisdom” (Gilbert 214). Gilbert uses ideas from genetics to explain this apparent *paradox*. Gilbert applies the concept of “super-replicator” genes to social psychology to explain why most people hold “false beliefs” about what makes them happy.

THE BIG QUESTION: **Is Daniel Gilbert’s argument convincing?** In a 3 to 4 page essay (Times or Times New Roman, font size 12, double spaced), take a position on Gilbert’s ideas by analyzing his claims and offering your own judgment (your position) on his argument.

In the THESIS STATEMENT, you answer the BIG QUESTION. This will be a statement of your POSITION.

Your essay should respond to Gilbert’s ideas by *extending them, complicating them, or refuting them*. What does this mean?

- A thesis/essay that **extends** Gilbert’s argument means that you agree with him, and you explain why, offering evidence to support this position.
- A thesis/essay that **complicates** Gilbert’s argument means that you agree with Gilbert on some things, or up to a point, but that you also see some problems with his argument.
- A thesis/essay that **refutes** Gilbert’s claims means that you offer reasons Gilbert’s argument is not convincing.

STEPS FOR WRITING ESSAY I

1. Create a WORKING THESIS that states your position: your response to the BIG QUESTION. **Is Daniel Gilbert’s argument convincing?**

In the thesis statement, you should EXTEND, COMPLICATE, or REFUTE Gilbert’s argument: DUE AT THE END OF CLASS ON FEB. 10.

2. Create an OUTLINE similar to the **Basic Essay Outline: DUE AT THE END OF CLASS ON FEB. 10.** For each body paragraph
 - Write a TOPIC SENTENCE that is a “mini-thesis statement” for that paragraph.
 - List the **supporting reasons** for each body paragraph.
 - Choose the **quotations** for each body paragraph.

ENG 101 Spring 2014 Essay #1

3. Develop the **supporting reasons** in the body paragraphs with explanations, examples, statistics from the article, etc.
4. Use QUOTATIONS from Gilbert's article to support important points in your argument.
5. After you write the body paragraphs, ask yourself this question: **do my body paragraphs really support my working thesis statement?** Do I need to change the thesis statement to fit my body paragraphs? Do I have to change my body paragraphs to fit my thesis statement?
6. Complete the FIRST DRAFT of your essay. Do not stop to correct grammar mistakes. Bring a copy of your first draft to class to share with me and your classmates. BRING THIS DRAFT TO CLASS ON FEB. 17.
7. Write a complete INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH. Briefly summarize Gilbert's argument in your introductory paragraph before you state your position.
8. Write a CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH. Restate the thesis and sum up your main points in the essay.
9. Congratulations, you have written a complete draft of Essay 1! **In the computer lab on Tuesday, Feb. 25, revise your essay.** Look for problems in your thinking and in your grammar.

Essay #1: final draft due on 2/25 by the end of computer lab. For all of your essays, turn in:

*An outline modeled on the Basic Essay Outline

*Your first draft (and other drafts if you printed them)

++Vocabulary sheet

++Answers to the questions on the Essay Log

*The final draft on top

*Points will be subtracted from your final essay grade if you do not turn in all of these materials.

++The Essay logs and Vocabulary sheets are worth 10% of your final grade.

If you would like to use eTutoring to help you write this essay, remember that the tutors at eTutoring need at least three days to read your draft and send it back to you with comments.