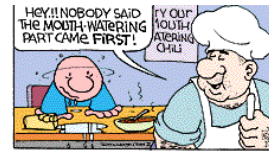


## DEV 110 Sample Essay: Definition (Also: Thesis/Illustration)



### Milquetoasts



A milquetoast is an interesting social misfit. He is a person that encounters one misfortune after another. He never succeeds at even simple tasks, and he always seems to have a cloud of despair hovering above his head. Because of his pathetic state in life, writers have described him extensively, hoping to warn productive people and growing children not to follow his life style. Thus the question arises, who is this milquetoast that people should be warned of? A milquetoast is an individual who never takes a personal stand on any issue and who never takes a risk.

A milquetoast cannot be distinguished by physical characteristics alone; his reactions to stress expose his true colors. When he is asked to go shopping, he responds negatively and makes up some excuse to cover up a more exact reason, which probably is his fear of the crowds he may encounter. When he is given an opportunity for a better job, his response typically is to think about it until the job is offered to and taken by another individual. As a result, he rationalizes that he didn't want the job in the first place. When he desires to date a particular girl, he does not ask her for the date because he thinks that she would not want to go out with him. Thus this pathetic person, plagued by fears closely resembling paranoia, never takes chances and, as a result, never wins.

One of the best descriptions of a milquetoast is presented in the classic fairy tale of Humpty Dumpty who sat on the wall. Often a milquetoast, when forced to make a decision, does not do so. Like Humpty Dumpty, he sits upon the fence of decision, debating with himself indefinitely. Unfortunately, the debating process causes the milquetoast to lose his balance. Then, like Humpty Dumpty, he takes a great fall. If he had made up his mind, he could have climbed safely off the wall. But he can't make up his mind, for that is the very essence of the milquetoast's problem. Consequently, a milquetoast, in pursuing his life's goals, if he has any, more often than not meets with untimely ruination because of his inability to make up his mind, come off his fence, and stand up for a position.

A contemporary example of a milquetoast can be found in the comic strip Ziggy. Because of his inability to be assertive when he needs to be, coupled with his ability to do the wrong thing at the wrong time, Ziggy's good intentions always result in non-productive expenditures of his energy. In last Sunday's comic section of the newspaper, Ziggy planted a garden containing rows of food for thought, wild oats, planted doubts, seeds of wisdom, grains of truth, and budding ideas. In the cartoon, Ziggy stood proudly, watering his garden. His idea was to obtain these character traits for himself, but his approach will result in a garden full of weeds, since character trait improvement obviously will not grow from plants.

Although it's a dog-eat-dog world in which only the strong survive, a few milquetoasts manage to make a life for themselves. For the most part, however, they go through life virtually unnoticed, and they go out of their way to remain that way as a result of their inability to act on their misguided good intentions. Milquetoasts go through life continually missing glorious opportunities and making themselves miserable.

## **Television: More Than Meets the Eye**



The television, which is the center of attraction in almost every household throughout the U.S., is found in the home of the rich and poor alike. It comes in all shapes, ranging from round to rectangular, and in all sizes, ranging from six inches to wall size. Some people think that all a television is good for is passing time. A television, however, serves three other purposes. It helps to entertain us, educate us, and influence us.

A television's main function is to entertain. It brings a wide variety of programs into the home. These programs include dramas, sporting events, comedy shows, and many other forms of entertainment. In addition to these forms of entertainment, television can also be used for a number of games. There is a computerized attachment called "Odyssey" that is hooked to the television to create such games as hockey, tennis, and soccer. These games are very challenging and are becoming very popular with the American public.

As well as entertaining us, television also plays a major role in educating us. Education in a child's early years can be enriched through such programs as Sesame Street, Uncle Al, and Romper Room. These programs are not only amusing to children but also teach them the basic skills of using numbers and colors and reading the alphabet. Other shows, such as 60 Minutes, news briefs, and public television specials, keep us well informed about happenings all over the world as well as in our communities.

The third function of television is that of influencing people. There is no better way to reach and influence the American public than through the use of television. Manufacturers such as Ford Motor Company, Chevrolet, and Chrysler all use television in influencing people to purchase their products. Politicians such as President Clinton and Senator Dole sway votes with it, and religious figures such as Billy Graham and Oral Roberts use it as a form of religious influence.

Television is not only a wonderful invention but also a major asset of our lives. Without the television, there would be far less awareness and knowledge of the surrounding world.