



DALLAS BAPTIST UNIVERSITY

Illustration Essay

The purpose of an illustration essay is to use sufficient examples to demonstrate a point that the writer believes in and wants to depict for the reader. This differs from an argumentative essay because it does not seek to convince the audience to adopt a specific point of view but instead helps the audience to understand the issue at hand through detailed examples. Illustration essays might be used to petition for a new traffic light being put in a busy intersection, explain the mission of an organization, detail a political stance, etc.

Choosing a Topic

The topic should be something that is relevant to the audience and can be elaborated upon. It will either pose an issue that needs attention or make a claim that will be supported in the body paragraphs. However, it will not turn into an argument meant to sway opinions in the body paragraphs. It will simply explain the claim made and propose examples or solutions.

Structure

Introduction

Like any other essay, the introduction should propose the topic and explain why it is worth discussion. The last sentence should be the thesis statement, which illustrates the author's point and introduces the examples that will be used in the body paragraphs. The thesis should be convincing to the reader but should not be an argument, using reasonable examples to prove the point.

- *Example: At DBU, professors are devoted to their faith, students are involved in worship and spiritual life, and the university emphasizes the importance of personal relationships and fellowship among students and faculty, all of which bring students closer to Christ.*

Body Paragraphs

A general rule is that readers should be shown at least three examples with at least one body paragraph for each example. In order to guide readers from one example to the next, each body paragraph should be introduced with a transitional phrase like *in contrast*, *consequently*, and *as a result of*. Each example should then be described in detail, illustrating the thesis. At the close of each body paragraph, the respective example should relate back to the thesis statement. Keep in mind that examples should be appropriate for the audience.

- In the thesis example above, each of the three points made will be further explained in the body paragraphs to show the validity of the claim made that students are brought closer to Christ.

Conclusion

The conclusion of the essay should include a final statement that refers to the thesis and ties all of the body paragraphs/examples together. Remember that writing an illustration essay is different than writing an argumentative essay: the point is not to sway the audience to a particular side. Rather, an illustration essay presents a topic and gives readers an illustration of it so that they may form their own opinion.