

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 (Time 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) of his argument.

STATE YOUR POSITION IN THE THESIS STATEMENT. It answers THE BIG QUESTION.

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

- A thesis that **extends** Gilbert’s argument means that you agree with him, and you explain why, offering your own evidence to support this position. See the “Agreeing -- with a Difference” section in the *Index of Templates* for some useful language for this type of thesis.
- A thesis 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. See the “Agreeing and Disagreeing Simultaneously” and “Making Concessions While Still Standing Your Ground” sections in the *Index of Templates*.
- A thesis that **refutes** Gilbert’s claims means that you argue against him. See the “Disagreeing, with Reasons” section in the *Index of Templates*.

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. Use the *Index of Templates* to find words to use in your thesis statement: DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS ON FEB. 11.
2. Create an OUTLINE similar to the **Basic Essay Outline:** DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS ON FEB. 11. 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.

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3. Develop the **supporting reasons** in the body paragraphs with explanations, examples, statistics from the article, etc.
4. Use QUOTATIONS to support important points in your argument. Always “sandwich” quotations: see “Introducing Quotations” and “Explaining Quotations” in the *Index of Templates*.
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. Write the FIRST DRAFT of your essay. Do not stop to correct grammar mistakes. DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF COMPUTER LAB ON FEB. 16.
7. Write a complete INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH: Briefly summarize Gilbert’s argument in your introductory paragraph before you state your position.
8. OPTIONAL: Gilbert’s research into happiness produces “counterintuitive” results. These are results that go against our usual ways of thinking about a thing -- in this case, what makes us happy. Write a sentence modeled on the “Introducing Standard Views” or “Indicating Who Cares” section of the *Index of Templates* about how Gilbert’s argument challenges people’s ideas about happiness. You could use this sentence to introduce the subject of your essay in the introductory paragraph.
9. Write a CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH. Restate the thesis and sum up your main points in the essay.
10. Congratulations, you have written a complete draft of Essay 1! **Bring this draft to the computer lab on MONDAY, Feb. 23 for a final revision.**

Essay #1: final draft due on 2/23 at 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.