

Ms. Boyd

Honors English II- 6th Period

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Explanatory Essay: Pope's Idea on Humanity

As humans, we are full of contradictions and have to examine ourselves to understand our nature. Alexander Pope conveys this in his poem "^{Hallas} An Essay on Man." He uses heroic couplets and antithesis to show a balance between the opposites of humanity. When Pope says, "know then thyself, presume not God to scan," he uses antithesis to reinforce the idea that the knowledge of human nature is to be achieved by the person himself by looking into himself. He further uses heroic couplets to demonstrate how we contradict ourselves; When he says, "he hangs between: in doubt to act, or rest:/ In doubt to deem himself a god, or beast," he expresses how we're paradoxical and unsure of ourselves. Alexander Pope believes that the understanding of human nature is within us. Accordingly, Richard Donnel, Mark Doty, Robert Frost, Shirley Jackson, E.O Wilson, Steven Pinker, William Shakespeare, Mark Twain, and May Swenson support this idea of examining ourselves to understand our nature.

good discussion of how form determines meaning

Fused Thesis

Solid topic sentence

Self-examination is a central idea that Pope believes is imperative to understanding our nature. He believes "the proper study of mankind is man;" therefore we have to "know then thyself[ourselves]." William Shakespeare's poem "Seven Ages of Man" demonstrates this idea. He supports Pope's idea of examining ourselves by describing the different divisions of a man's lifespan. He uses symbolism to describe the world as a stage in which "all men and women merely players," and he uses figurative language to demonstrate "this strange eventful history" of man. These literary devices support Pope's idea by comparing man to actors.

Just like actors, men and women aren't free to do as they will which suggest they do not know their place in the world or who they are because they are not able to examine themselves. Men and women are directed and controlled by their destiny; they make their appearances then go away as actors do. Furthermore, Richard Connel supports Pope's idea in his fictional story "The Most Dangerous Game" by expressing how we're "great lord(s) of all things, yet prey to all." Rainsford believes that humans are above animals: humans being the hunters, and animals the hunted. However, once he is put in their shoes, he realizes that humans too are "prey to all." Rainsford's new perspective supports Pope's idea of examining ourselves to understand man by expressing how the struggle for survival can change us and that we aren't exempt from animalistic instincts. In May Swenson's poem "Southbound on the Freeway," she uses common metaphors to examine man's role in the age of automation:

does this transition like the ideas, or does it just merge the texts?

good tie in that answers



are we the intelligence that controls the machines, or just part of the system that makes them run? We get this sense that this is the question the author is asking when the narrator wonders whether “those soft shapes, / shadowy inside / the hard bodies-are they / their guts or their brains?” The narrator is curious as to whether the figures it sees inside the vehicles are the control system or just a part of it. This poem supports the idea of self-examination to understand our nature by expressing how if we examine our roles in technology we’ll learn our place in humanity.

all your ideas come back to the idea of self-examination

[The zeniths and nadirs of humanity are defining moments in our history] This idea supports Pope’s idea of examining ourselves to understand our nature by describing how once we’ve examined ourselves we discover our highest and lowest points. ^{move} In Pope’s poem “An Essay on Man,” he looks at all of our nadirs ~~negative aspects~~. He says we’re “rudely great” and “darkly wise” and describes how we’re often **erroneous** and confused. Accordingly, we get the sense that he’s expressing our nadirs when he says we’re “sole judge(s) of truth, in endless error hurled: The glory, jest, and riddle of the world!” Notice the last line: he’s giving more emphasis to it than everything else by using an exclamation mark. He uses anticlimax ^{You’re using literary language well} to express that sudden fall from ‘glory,’ ‘riddle,’ and ‘jest’: instead of building to a climax, he’s taking us down to nadir levels. Furthermore, Mark Twain and Steven Pinker describe the zenith and

nadir points in humanity. In Mark Twain's essay "The Lowest Animal" he uses logos to ^{what kind of logos?} explain our lowest points- negative and disgusting aspects.

He says humans are **avaricious** and cruel and that we have descended from higher animals. ^{again} Mark uses logos to show that these weren't his opinions and that he hadn't "guessed or speculated or conjectured, but have used what is commonly called the scientific method." These nadir

points are defining moments because they represent the negative side of our personalities. ^{transitive word needed} In Steven Pinker's essay "Violence Vanquished" he

demonstrates how humans have descended from their heights in violence. He uses logos and allusions to describe how humans are "living in the most peaceful era in the existence of our species." This is a

defining moment because it shows just how **pugnacious** and aggressive humans can be. Furthermore, ^{Synthesis} E.O. Wilson and Shirley Jackson discuss

humans' nadirs. In Wilson's excerpt "Is War Inevitable" he uses logos to support his idea that "war is embedded in our very nature ." He uses a fable and historical evidence to prove his point that "modern man

inherits all the innate pugnacity and all the love of glory of his ancestors." This nadir is a defining moment in our history because it exemplifies our innate combativeness and habitual inclination to war

with ourselves and others. Shirley Jackson's short story "The Lottery" is another nadir of humanity that uses situational irony to express how

humans can be merciless and **pernicious** toward one another. She tell us that "they greeted one another and exchanged bits of gossip" making

it seem as though the lottery is a festive event like the square dances and Halloween programs. She uses situational irony to give us expectations of a **jovial** event when really it's a bizarre **ritual**. This is a defining moment because it suggests an underlying evil and weakness of human kind.

You've covered a lot of text in this paragraph

Bottom to start off with Pope

Humans tend to cling on to tangible objects or abstract concepts because of their value to them. This idea supports Pope's idea of examining ourselves to understand human nature by showing once we examine ourselves we realize that humans fixate or hang onto things that may or may not have any value. An example of this is ^{weak words} in Mark Doty's poem "Golden Retrievals. He uses imagery to help express idea that people should live in the now. He illustrates this idea of clinging onto things through the dog's owner who is apparently in grief over the past and anxious of the future. The golden retriever tries to **disengage** him from his fog of anxiety and grief, but he's just too deep in thought. This poem supports the idea of clinging on to tangible objects or abstract ideas by expressing the theme of staying in the now and taking life one day at a time. In Robert Frost poem "Mending Wall" he uses symbolism to express how boundaries protect us and help keep the peace but keep people from communicating with one another. The narrator of the poem is a contradiction to himself. He says he doesn't see the point in walls but his neighbor does and resorts to an old adage: "Good fences make

good neighbors." The narrator disagrees about the wall, yet he meets with his neighbor every year or so to make repairs to it. He himself goes to the wall at different times of the year to repair damage done by hunters and he contacts his neighbor at wall-mending time to set the annual appointment. Even though he says he doesn't see the point in walls, there's something in him that does love a wall, or at least the act of making one. This poem supports the idea of humans clinging onto things by the narrator hanging onto the act of mending walls.

~~In conclusion~~, all these statements support Alexander Pope's complex idea that if we examine ourselves we'll get a better understanding of humanity. Pope's assertion of humanity is important because he expresses how if we examine ourselves we'll get a better understanding of who we are and what are our strengths and weaknesses. He shows that humans' lives are full of chaos, contradiction, and fallaciousness, and believes we're not sure of ourselves, who we are, and what our place is in this world. We're "alike in ignorance"- "whether he thinks too little, or too much." As humans, we are the "sole judge of truth, in endless error hurled:/ the glory, jest, and riddle of the world."

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