

Student Essay

The essay below is the kind that supports a main point by illustrating several supporting points, or subtopics. Although this is one of the most common forms used in academic writing, it isn't the only one. This essay is a revised and edited draft. In the section on revising your work, you will see some of the steps the writer took to arrive at her final version.

Why Liberal Arts?

Sarah Chen

Introduction

Our sociology teacher once asked the class a difficult question. She wanted to know whether we would rather have our college degree without the education or the education without the degree. Most of the students decided that they would rather have the degree, because the jobs they wanted required college degrees. Other students, including me, argued that, in the long run, knowledge is more important than a meaningless piece of paper. We didn't settle the argument, but we had to think a lot about what an education, particularly a liberal arts education, is for. With so much emphasis on career training, we wondered, why should students spend time taking courses that aren't required in their nursing or engineering curriculum? *We came up with some good reasons why a liberal arts education is more important than ever.*

Thesis Statement

Topic Sentence

First, there is the question of careers. Students often make the mistake of thinking they will succeed by getting narrow training for a specific job without acquiring a good general education. They want to earn a lot of money in a hurry, and sometimes they do. When computers first came on the scene, people who trained as computer scientists and programmers often made a lot of money, sometimes even without any higher education. But then the job market in computers shrank, as jobs were sent overseas, and many of those well-paid workers were laid off. They had no other training or education to fall back on. In the long run, a person with a broad education will be much better able to change jobs and adapt to new technologies than someone with a narrower background.

Supporting Example

Topic Sentence

Another reason why a good liberal arts education matters is that it promotes participation in society. Jobs and salaries are important, but they are not a person's whole life. Most people gain a great deal from their activities in local organizations, labor unions, religious institutions, political causes, and other associations. If fewer and fewer people achieve a broad education, our social institutions will suffer. Where will we get the scout leaders, PTA officers, neighborhood spokespersons, and even intelligent voters? Education is not just for the benefit of the individual; it is also necessary for the good of society.

Support by Explaining an Effect

Topic Sentence

People need to be broadly educated for the sake of their families as well. Most parents want their children to achieve at least as much as they have accomplished and have at least as good a lifestyle. Knowing about psychology helps parents raise emotionally healthy children, and knowing about many subjects allows parents to guide their children's education. As well-educated people, they set better examples for their sons and daughters, causing them to set higher goals for themselves. Since many children do not follow the same careers as their fathers and mothers, parents will be better able to communicate with their children if they know

**Support by
Analyzing a
Process**

Topic Sentence

Finally, a good education helps individuals to cultivate their own talents. One of the greatest satisfactions in life is the expression of one's own creativity. My aunt, who has just retired from her job as a bank manager, has begun writing poems and composing music for them. She studied music and literature in college but never had time to do much more than listen to concerts and read poetry and novels while she was working. She wrote some poems, but now that she has more time, she is writing a lot of them and composing songs. And she has actually gotten several songs chosen by record companies to be included on CDs by well-known artists. Her success is giving her as much fun and satisfaction as her job ever did. She wouldn't have been able to be creative without a good liberal arts education.

**Support with
Personal
Experience**

Conclusion

All of these reasons won't be enough to stop some students from choosing narrow technical training and ignoring their overall education. But many of those who do will probably regret their choice later and may go back and take courses in subjects they missed out on when they were younger. Luckily, it is possible nowadays to get all sorts of courses online or at local colleges, no matter how old you are. *In whatever way you get it, however, a liberal arts education has a lot of advantages.*

**Restatement of
Thesis**