

Sample Student Synthesis Essay

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date Teenagers: A Threat to Adults

A common phrase that adults can testify to hearing from any given teenager is, "You don't understand!" This proves a struggle between the youth and the adults that quite possibly is never-ending. Adults make assumptions about kids, based on the way they dress, which pushes kids further and further away. In the essay, "Goths in Tomorrowland" by Thomas Hine (2001), he emphasizes the beliefs that adults began the idea of youth alienation from older societies and the teenagers keep it that way. Donna Gaine's (2001) essay, "Teenage Wasteland," discusses four teenagers who were mocked and misunderstood by adults and reporters alike. Jon Katz (2001) lets the kids explain themselves about their seclusion from society and the misconceptions about them in his column, "More from the Hellmouth: Kids Tell About Rage." The fear that elders show towards young people is merely a fear of the unknown. Adults are worried about the younger generations because of their misunderstandings of the youth culture, their failure to accept youth into the adult society, and the instigation provoked from young people.

Misunderstanding of youth creates the gap between adults and teenagers. Many teenagers spend their whole teen experience searching for someone to just understand them. A lot of them do not even make it through this experience because they give up feeling that no one knows what they are going through. Parents also fear for their kids because they do not understand them. A boy named Evan best explains this in "More from the Hellmouth: Kids Tell About Rage." He says, "People fear what they don't understand, and let's face it, the world . . . isn't something most people can understand . . ." (Katz, 2001, p.81). I can remember going through hard times of changing schools so frequently and my parents thinking it was so easy for me. When in reality, it was the hardest thing to do. It is hard on a kid to have to make friends, move, and then start all over again. When I tried to talk to them about it, they could never see where I was coming from or my point of view on anything. There is nothing that can be done for adults to be able to fully understand the younger generation. It is just a gap that is placed there by human nature and this generation gap can never be fully understood. Regarding my experience mentioned earlier, I noticed that my parents made no effort to understand what I was feeling and how their decisions would affect me. That is what separated me from them, the fear of the unknown.

The fact that the majority of adults make no effort to accept young people into their world is no alien idea. The teenagers from "Goths in Tomorrowland" were not accepted by adults simply for the reason that the teens dressed differently from what was considered to be normal dress. "They [adults] confuse thrashers with metalheads and goths because they all wear black. Then they assume that they're all taking drugs and worshipping Satan" (Hine, 2001, p.71). Adults do not understand that teenagers are constantly searching to define themselves as individuals. Expression through clothing is a form of that.

Yet, Hine's article is not about merely how the teenagers dressed differently to express themselves, "It is about the alienation of teenagers from adult society, and equally about the alienation of that society from its teenagers. The mere presence of teenagers threatens us [adults]" (p. 69). Is it the idea that this young generation of gothic-dressed supposed losers will be replacing the elders when their time is up that is so scary? Or are the youth of today causing this boundary that is formed by instigating the adults with things that they know scare them?

The fault of the misunderstanding between youth and elders is not all due to the close-mindedness of adults. Young people draw adults to see them as irresponsible and immature by the way they act and carry themselves. It is almost as if they are purposely trying to show the world that they are independent, young, and can do whatever they please.

The body alterations that young people use to assert that they are no longer children successfully frighten grown-ups, but they also convince them these weird creatures are well short of being adults. The ring through the lip or the nipple merely seems to demonstrate that they are not ready for adult responsibility. What they provoke is not respect but restrictions. (Hine, 2001, p. 71)

By showing off their ability to create their own identity, they are causing trouble for themselves. They should be able to express themselves freely, but instead they are left with no choice but to keep in and guard their emotions. Yet, by guarding their emotions by putting on these facades, they are "actively guarding their psychic space because the adults controlled everything else" (Gaines, 2001, p.66). Another thing that sometimes can separate youth from their adults is their inability to speak up. They are afraid that if they say what is on their mind or how they are feeling that it could be used against them. According to Donna Gaines' "Teenage Wasteland," "Like any other alienated youth . . . , they don't like to talk to adults" (p. 65). By talking to adults, they are giving themselves away and "whatever you [they] say can be held against you [them]" (p. 65). Their deepest and darkest secrets should only be shared with someone who understands them.

This game of misunderstanding played between adults and youth has been going on since the beginning of time. They are considered to be in two different societies and it will be like that until the end of time. Adults do not completely understand teenagers and they never will. It is just the truth of being either an adult or a teenager. No one can understand both. Adults refuse to accept youth inside of their world and youth refuse to be a part of their elder's world. It is a vicious cycle. Adults have to learn to let teenagers live their lives; even when they feel like protecting their children.

References

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