Iconic Image Impact Essay

Iconic: relating to or characteristic of somebody or something admired, especially something symbolizing a movement.

Mode of Discourse: Cause and Effect

Causal analysis attempts to explain the cause and effect relationship between two or more elements. Some essays tend to focus on cause, whereas others mainly analyze effects. In many essays, such as this assignment, the writer focuses on both causes and effects, but emphasizes one. The early part of your essay should cover the historical and social context that led up to (cause) the creation of the image, which will lead into the primary portion of the essay in which you explain the impact of the iconic image in American culture.

The key to writing a good causal paper is for you to clearly establish the likelihood that the relationships between events can be attributed to the causes and effects hypothesized. It is highly unlikely, however, that your explanation will be the only one possible or entirely “provable” as both causes and effects are complex and often multi-faceted. Well-reasoned arguments are an important aspect of a cause and effect essay.

Consider the most important impact or effect, unintended effects, and ripple or side effects. Determine the scope of the effects you will discuss in your essay so that you provide a thorough and significant analysis while limiting effects that seem less significant or irrelevant.

Iconic Image Impact Essay Assignment

❖ 3-4 pages and a References page, standard essay format: 12 point font, double-spaced
❖ Select an iconic graphic or visual image that has had a significant cultural impact. This could take the form of a monument, memorial, magazine cover, a painting, a photograph, a statue, or even a print advertisement (note that it must be one specific image versus a video).
   NOTE: You will be required to embed your picture below your name on your title page.
❖ Use the cause and effect mode of discourse to analyze how the creation, visual impact, and dissemination (maybe alteration and manipulation, depending on the image’s history) of this memorable image has affected the social, political, or cultural reality of its time as well as had lasting effects.
❖ Make sure that you are analyzing a single image. The primary point of analysis for this essay is the effect of the image on people’s ideas and actions; however, realize that a causal chain of events may move your analysis to events that came from reactions to the image and one person or group of people’s reaction may affect others’ reactions, etc.
❖ A minimum of 3 research sources must be used.

Many of the following questions should be considered in developing the paper:
❖ Who created the image and how was it first disseminated?
❖ How and why did it become well-known?
❖ Was there a particular sequence of events whereby the image became well known?
❖ What does the image depict?
❖ What is its visual impact? (This may require interpreting the image yourself or drawing upon established critics who have themselves analyzed and interpreted the image.)
What was the initial and subsequent public reaction to the image? What emotions did it provoke or inspire? Did the image gain a degree of notoriety? Was it ridiculed or censured? Has the perception or appreciation changed over time?

What is the important historical and/or social context, regarding the conditions of the time, which made this image have such a forceful impact?

Did the image enable viewers to see themselves or the world in a different light?

Did the image launch a movement or significant shift in a field or discipline?

Did the image become a symbol of larger social issues? (For example, did the image give visible form to attitudes that had been suppressed or of which the public had not been consciously aware?)

Have there been different manifestations of the original work? Has the original image been altered or manipulated? (For instance, other ‘artists may have paid tribute to the piece or even created a parody of it. Since its inception Hooper’s painting Nighthawks has inspired an opera, numerous movie scene, and even an episode of The Simpsons. Similarly, an original photo may have been subsequently reproduced in a different art form, such as a painting or statue. In some cases, the image may even have been exploited for commercial purposes.)

What is the iconic image’s legacy? Why will it continue to enthrall viewers? Has the image become so tarnished by its fame or notoriety that the creator’s intended impact has been destroyed?

Some Other Considerations

➢ It will be necessary to conduct fairly extensive research in order to find important archival information on the selected work and to establish information on social context. Sources should be deemed valid and authoritative -- exceptions might be reproductions of manipulated images, etc. Researched information should be documented properly, so plan to include internal citation and a Reference page that adheres to A.P.A. format.

➢ Although this paper contains elements of a research paper, its primary purpose is to show effects and causal relationships.

➢ Elevate the writing with an engaging style that allows the reader to appreciate the impact of the subject.

General format of the essay (sometimes in this order but not always):

Historical background and context in which the image was first “distributed” (Cause)
Creation and intended purpose of the image
Immediate reaction to the image and effect(s)
Long-term influences of the image and its legacy in America