Monuments Synthesis Essays: Sample Essays

Sample Essay 1A – Score ____________

There are many ways to memorialize a person or event. One can write a song, piece together a scrapbook, or design a monument to commemorate a special person or an event. A monument, through careful consideration of its location, size, material, and purpose, can effectively pay homage to deep sacrifice or honor moments of great achievement.

When a group or agency first contemplates memorializing an event or person through a monument, they should consider location. A beautiful park or a place where the person held close to their heart can elevate the meaning of the monument. A monument of Christopher Columbus stands tall in Riverside Park in Eaton, Pennsylvania (Source B). Seeing his monument while strolling under the trees on a sunny day in Riverside Park makes one remember the important role Christopher Columbus had in American history. If his monument were located behind an abandoned building or amongst a cluster of billboards and other signs, the people would not consider his importance as beautiful and inspiring. When contemplating where to build a museum to commemorate the Holocaust, many individuals were furious with the plans of a Holocaust museum being built onto the Mall in Washington, D.C. (Source E). Protesters questioned why “a museum dedicated to the memory of the Holocaust would be built in the United States, who did little to stop the Holocaust from occurring” (Source E). A group or agency must consider that the Mall in Washington, D.C. has no significant importance to anyone effected by the Holocaust. When considering building a monument it is important to consider the location in order to properly memorialize an event or person.

Once a location has been determined, the size and material for the monument must be planned. The size of the monument or museum is important to ensure that the person or event being commemorated gets the proper amount of remembrance. After the decision to build a Holocaust Museum in the Mall in Washington, D.C. was made, protesters began debating that the design plan was too large (E). The purpose of the museum was to remember the Holocaust, “not to overpower the Mall or its visitors” (Source E). By downsizing the museum, they were able to create a place of remembrance without overpowering the other memorials and monuments in the Mall. The material of a monument can also help provide the right sense of remembrance. When designing the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., Maya Lin put much thought into the material of the monument. She chose “black granite in order to make the surface reflective and peaceful” (Source G). The mirroring effect of the Granite helped to create a world of reality and a world of remembrance. Her choice of material helps to complete the feeling of sorrow while remembering the bravery of those who served in Vietnam. The material and size of a memorial can greatly change the feeling of remembrance and its effect on those paying change to an event or person.

Additionally, when considering a memorializing an event or person and in creating a monument, the message a group or agency is trying to portray through the monument should be considered. When designing the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Maya Lin decided to create a wall of names cut into the ground. It was important to commemorate those who lost their lives in Vietnam and she felt the best way to remember everything about each individual person was engraving their name into a wall. This allows people to remember everything about the person rather that one instance, as a picture does (Source G). When constructing the monument for Crazy Horse, the sculptors decided to have him “pointing out over his beloved Black Hills” (Source C). This commemorates the great accomplishments Crazy Horse had in the Black Hills while commemorating his love for them (Source C). The message a monument displays is very important in the remembrance of that person or event.

When designing a monument to commemorate a person or significant event, the location, size, material, and purpose of the monument should be considered.

Sample Essay 1B – Score ____________

Monuments are structures which honor great moments, immortalizing the memory in granite and stone. They are truly everywhere – these manmade structures. It is possible to find them in parks, carved in mountains, and possibly standing next to great historical places as well. But, one cannot just create a monument and expect it to be able to “stand”... What factors must be considered? If a group or agency decides to try to immortalize an event or person in a monument, they should consider the following. The monument should work with surrounding landscape – not destroy it.
In history, there have been some monuments created that were not treated well—perhaps it did not have a profound impact on people viewing the structure. A certain H. Elroy Johnson posed for a sculpture, named “The Maine Lobsterman.” (Roadside America) This sculpture was to be cast in bronze and displayed at the 1939 New York World’s Fair, but because of money issues, this could not be completed. Instead, the statue was coated in a bronze paint. Over the years, the statue was neglected and was slowly becoming destroyed. The statue was vandalized, and eaten by Rats. Obviously, people lacked respect for this object. Why? It is because this only meaningful to a select few people. When creating monuments, you must be willing to care for it—“Keep it in a place where it is appreciated. Otherwise, it will not be cared about.

It is evident that the monuments created should also be there in order to spark one’s memory. To stand as a great reminder of the past. A sculptor named Korczak Ziolkowski made an icon of Crazy Horse, an influential Sioux leader. (Downes) Downes says, “...it was hard not to be impressed, even moved, by this effort to honor the memory of a people this country once tried mightily to erase.” Even in that quote, the word “memory” was said. This monument may offend some people, but honestly, it serves its purpose. It is a reminder of this country’s past—one that will not be easily forgotten.

Lastly, this monument should not disturb any of the nature that was there before it. It should work harmoniously with the land. The nature and monument itself should work together to bring out the best qualities in each other. In Source G, Maya Lin says, “The idea of destroying the park to create something that by its very nature should commemorate life seemed hypocritical, nor was it in my nature.” In reference to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. She also said, “I wanted my design to work with the, to make something with site, not to fight it or dominate it.” It is clear that Lin has a great respect for nature, which is both admirable and thoughtful. She creates a monument which not only coincides with nature, but is also extremely meaningful and is an immortalized memory of the past.

So in conclusion, there are no doubt many other things to keep in mind when considering creating a monument. But, the most important things, are that first off, the monument should be meaningful. It should be looked upon in awe and satisfaction, making people reflect not only on the monument. It should have a great connection with the past, and have the ability to be remembered far into the future. last, the monument should work with nature to create something beautiful and unique with the land.

Sample Essay 1C – Score _________

As you tour the country, monuments and memorials are scattered everywhere. They are important because they remind Americans of the past and how far America has progressed. However, the government does not need to spend an excessive amount of money on memorials and monuments. In some cases the monuments and memories don’t bring emotion to people, it’s all personal.

Memorials and monuments don’t have meaning if the person has no personal relationship or experience with the event or person. For example, The Lincoln Memorial has no importance to some, “It holds no relic or spiritual trace of a past presence”, Lincoln Memorial “did not even exist in his lifetime.” (Source A) It sits there on the mud from the potomac river valley since the late 19th century, it is pure representation. Why waste money on something most Americans don’t appreciate, “The people and their names would allow everyone to respond and remember.” (Source G) Memorials and monuments don’t show appreciation any greater than an individual who educates oneself about an event that means something to them.

Also, money is wasted on the location and the production of the monument. Surprisingly, there is “a Holocaust museum in the town whose political sages refused to lift a finger to halt the Holocaust or open our shores to the few survivors.” (Source E) The museum is located in the Washington D.C. mall which angered many people, not only did USA not help during the holocaust, but now America decides to put the museum in a mall. Having monuments and memorials can sometimes cause more bad than good. Maya Lin, designer of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, did a fantastic job in designing the memorial so Americans can enjoy and appreciate the veterans of the war without the thought of the money and damage problem. To build a monument that would “destr[y] the park” would be “...hypocritical.” (Source G) Monuments are built to remind us of how far we have come, and to give thanks to all these who have sacrificed, but we shouldn’t damage the earth by doing so.

Simply, remembering names and educating ourselves about events and people would show more appreciation. Monuments and memorials they can cause more harm then good. Monuments and Memorials need to be toned down, and be built with more emotion, that relates to people.