

Example of a Critical Response Essay

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Topic: American Capitalism: The New Face of Slavery

I. Sample Introduction of a Critical Response Essay

Capitalism is a dominant characteristic of the American economy. In this case, Matthew Desmond's article "In Order to Understand the Brutality of American Capitalism, You Have to Start on the Plantation" discusses the role of slavery in shaping contemporary business practices. Specifically, the author attempts to convince the audience that the brutality of American capitalism originates from slavery. In turn, Desmond lays a strong but simple foundation for his argument, which ensures that the audience can conceptualize the link between plantation slavery and contemporary American capitalistic practices.

II. Example of a Body in a Critical Response Essay

A. Example of the First Body Paragraph: American Capitalism

Early in the article, Desmond informs readers of the high variability in the manifestation of capitalism in societies, which creates the impression that American capitalism is a choice. For example, Desmond (2019) argues that the brutality of American capitalism is simply one of the possible outcomes of a society built on capitalistic principles because other societies implement the same principles in a manner that is liberating, protective, and democratic. Moreover, Desmond begins his argument by eliminating a popular presumption that exploitation and oppression are unavoidable outcomes of capitalism. In turn, this strategic move to establish this fact is in the introductory section of the article because it invites the audience to rethink the meaning of capitalism. Furthermore, it plants doubt regarding the 'true' meaning of capitalism outside the context of American society.

B. Example of the Second Body Paragraph: American Capitalism: Slavery and American's Economic Growth

After establishing that the perception of capitalism through the lens of the American society has some bias, Desmond proceeds to provide detailed evidence to explain the attempt to camouflage the obvious link between the slavery and America's economic growth. For instance, Desmond (2019) notes the role of Alfred Chandler's book, *The Visible Hand*, and Caitlin Rosenthal's book, *Accounting for Slavery*, in breaking the link between management practices in plantations and modern corporations by suggesting that the current business practices are a consequence of the 19th-century railroad industry. In this case, Desmond uses this evidence to make a logical appeal to the audience, which makes his argument more convincing because he explains the reason behind the exclusion of slavery in the discourse on the modern industry. As a result, Desmond dismisses one of the main counterarguments against his central argument, which increases its persuasive power.

C. Example of the Third Body Paragraph: Input vs. Output Dynamic

Desmond emphasizes the link between slavery and American capitalism to readers by using the simple input vs. output dynamic throughout the article. For example, Desmond (2019) compares the *Plantation Record and Account Book* to the heavy digital surveillance techniques in modern workplaces because they collect data, which the employers use to maximize productivity while minimizing inputs. In particular, the comparison reveals that employers did not stop the practice of reducing laborers into units of production with fixed productivity thresholds. Moreover, the constant repetition of the theme of low input and high output dominates the body paragraphs, which makes it nearly impossible for readers to lose sight of the

link between slavery and business practices under American capitalism. In turn, the simplification of the underlying logic in Desmond's argument ensures its clarity to the audience.

III. Sample Conclusion of a Critical Response Essay

Desmond carefully plans the presentation of his argument to the audience, which allows readers to follow the ideas easily. In particular, the author starts with a call for readers to set aside any presumptions concerning capitalism and its origin. Then, Desmond provides the audience with an alternative narrative with support from seminal texts in slavery and economics. On the whole, Desmond manages to convince the audience that the American capitalistic society is merely a replica rather than an aberration of slavery.

Reference

Desmond, M. (2019, August 12). *In order to understand the brutality of American capitalism, you have to start on the plantation*. New York Times.

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/slavery-capitalism.html>