

Synthesis Practice with “Boy Problems” and “Putting Down the Gun.”

Prompt: American culture, over the past five decades, has seen establishment of many organizations whose missions are to protect the civil rights of particular groups of people—NOW (the National Organization for Women), the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), GLAAD (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation). While there may be little, or no, need for an organization with a mission to protect the civil rights of men in general, there is no doubt that a healthy culture must be thoughtful about the messages it sends to all of its members.

What messages does American culture send to men? Is there any need to examine, redefine, or alter these messages?

Instructions:

1. Write a sentence or two that answers the question above. This is your claim (thesis, position). There is no magic formula for a thesis. Just write a sentence or two answering the question that expresses YOUR opinion.

2. With the prompt above in mind, read over the two printed essays I’ve given you and underline or highlight SHORT passages that you could use (quote or paraphrase).

3. Be sure to mark information that you could use as support for your position as well as information you could use as a basis for refutation or concession.

I have a sixteen-year-old brother, and every time an announcement is made over the school intercom about a meeting of the Minority Achievement club, or the Gay Straight Alliance, or the Feminist club, he makes the most annoying comments like, “How come there’s no ‘Men’s Achievement’ group or ‘Male Pride’ group?” He’s joking when he asks these questions (I hope). But the more I think about it, the more I wonder about the messages that American culture sends to its boys. Is it time to move on from sit-coms on television that highlight the long-suffering, wise wife and mother while making a joke of the bumbling, narrow-minded husband? I think, perhaps, that it actually is time to rethink the messages we send to boys and to alter them. Perhaps it is time to say to men, there is value in your intellect, uniqueness, and individuality.

In her New York Times article, Ann Hulbert reports that “Black women now earn twice as many college degrees as black men” and “among whites, women earn 30 percent more bachelor's degrees than men and some 50 percent more master's degrees” (Source A). It seems clear from these statistics that men are falling behind when it comes to education. Could it be that we are somehow discouraging them? In her essay called “Putting Down the Gun,” Rebecca Walker frets about the fact that her son came home from school at age 11 feeling certain that he would have to join a sports team in order to fit in with the “harsh realities of his sixth-grade social scene” (Source B). And now I find myself wondering—with all the time that we’ve spent telling everyone but men that their minds are valuable, have we forgotten to respect the value of the male mind, placing importance, instead, on their physical prowess?