

EngWr 101—Essay Assignment #1

Assigned reading:

- Ansary, Tamin. "Education at Risk: Fallout from a Flawed Report." *edutopia*. n.d. The National Commission on Excellence in Education. "A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform." U.S. Department of Education, 1983.
- Levine, Murray, and Adeline Levine. "Charters and Foundations: Are We Losing Control of Our Public Schools?" *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, vol. 84, no. 1, 2014, pp. 1-6. *Academic Search Complete*.
- Morrow, John. "Whose Side is Superman on, Anyway?" *Finding Superman: Debating the Future of Public Education in America*, edited by Watson Scott Swail. Teacher's College P, 2012. pp. 87-96.
- Ravitch, Diane. "The Myth of Charter Schools." *Finding Superman: Debating the Future of Public Education in America*, edited by Watson Scott Swail. Teacher's College P, 2012. pp. 19-30.
- Waiting for "Superman."* Directed by Davis Guggenheim. Paramount Vantage, 2010.

Even though *Waiting for "Superman"* builds a compelling argument, an argument that *might* seem reasonable and well-documented, many critics have faulted its oversimplification of the issues.

Assignment:

Write an essay that evaluates the arguments made by *Waiting for "Superman"* and its critics—that is, explain who makes the stronger argument, the film or its critics?

You will need to take a focused position and support that opinion with facts from the film, from the critics' comments, and perhaps from "A Nation at Risk." And you **MUST** be able to support your position.

This paper *must* include at least one additional critical response to the texts you are referencing, which will necessitate some research—a minimum of **one** outside sources in your paper. Thus, the paper will use a minimum of *four* sources: "A Nation at Risk," *Waiting for "Superman,"* at least one of the assigned critics (Ansary, Levine & Levine, Morrow, or Ravitch), and your researched critical source.

Your paper *must* follow MLA format, including page setup and parenthetical references for your sources of information.

Some suggested strategies for preparing to write the draft:

- Compare and contrast the summaries of "A Nation at Risk," *Waiting for "Superman,"* and each of the critics.
- How do the ideas in these summaries match? (for example, all of them talk about teachers, but how? and *why?*)

- Separate facts and opinions—the summaries should identify the opinions, the main ideas, but focus on how each text supports those opinions. Are the opinions based upon, supported by facts? or are the opinions emotionally based without a great deal of factual, verifiable support?
- Do the **facts** agree in all these sources? if there are differences in the facts, how might you explain them? Does the author help the reader understand the connections between the facts and the opinions of the text?

Look closely at the ideas presented in each text you use in your paper and select a single topic or issue to address in your paper. The biggest difficulty in this assignment is trying to do too much; find a narrow, limited focus for your paper.