

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:

Using "A Nation at Risk" as a context for your discussion, write an essay that evaluates the arguments made by *Waiting for "Superman"* and its critics—that is, IF we accept "A Nation at Risk" as an honest and accurate assessment of America's educational system, 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.

First, consider how *Waiting for "Superman"* might consider itself an answer to the very public, yet largely ignored publication of "A Nation at Risk"—

- Does the film accurately address the issues and recommendations listed in the report? Or does the film attempt to address *all* the issues and recommendations? Or does it limit its responses? Explain your answer.
- Has the problem changed since "A Nation at Risk" was published? Are the issues today the same as they were in 1983, or are there social, political, or economic changes that would affect the educational problems in America? (Another way of asking this would be to consider how clearly the group of professionals that made up the National Commission saw the future needs of education.)

Then, consider the critics' arguments—

- What are some of the *common* criticism made of the film? (Remember that there will always be one or two people who find fault with anything, but common themes or consistent complaints deserve some consideration.)
- Has there been any subsequent research or documentation to support the criticisms of the film?

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