



High School Essays on Families

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After reading *Hamlet*, our class discussed such issues as gender roles in families and what is and should be acceptable behavior for family members. Some of the students' essays, written as a result of those discussions, follow.

My So-Called Life

Anonymous

Grade 12



Being an adopted child is very difficult, because I have to do everything I am told or get considered a bad kid. I was 12 years old when my aunt (my mom's sister) adopted me. It was hard for me at first, because I was going to a different country, which I knew little of. My uncle is in the Navy and was stationed in Japan at the time. A few months passed by and I was getting into trouble because I wasn't responsible enough. So at age 13 I was expected to do chores like washing dishes, laundry, vacuuming, dusting, etc.

My aunt and uncle have a child who is three years younger than me, who's a spoiled brat. She doesn't do anything in the house but tattle on me, get me in trouble, read my journal, take my belongings, snoop in my room, and sneak my clothes. I can't say anything to my aunt because she won't believe me anyway. My aunt and I didn't get along at all; in fact, we always had an argument. Everytime I make a small mistake, my aunt will make a big deal out of it, but whenever her "little angel" does something wrong it's forgiven and forgotten. I didn't care because she's the real daughter and I'm just adopted.

At first I didn't call them mom and dad; I felt awkward because I didn't feel loved. I was closer to my uncle, so when I got in trouble he backed me up. I didn't like my aunt because she was too strict and gets aggravated easily towards me. I told her I didn't trust her because she didn't trust me, and she's always up on my business. She would look through my room as soon as I left for school, thinking she would find some crack. I never talked to them about any problems or what's happening in my life.

As I was getting older, my relationship with them was getting slimmer; I isolated myself from them. I was the outcast of the family; sometimes they would leave me by myself in the house while they were out shopping. I felt so alone and became rebellious. I still did my chores and stayed in my room all night. I learned to talk back and became a smartass. I'm in trouble every week; all my friends felt sorry for me because I got in trouble for small things. But I told my friends not to worry about it because I owe them a debt of gratitude of which I am and become. Also, I'd tell them it won't be long till I leave; as soon as I graduate, I'm out!

I was responsible for my cousin; when something goes wrong I get blamed. I hated being the oldest, because I get blamed for everything! Even though we all fight a lot, there have been good times. My aunt and uncle spoiled my sister and I; we would go shopping every week. My sister and I always have new thing and I had a car. Our rooms are decorated with our favorite Disney character, and complete with appliances.

I think that trust is very important to have between parents and children. Children become rebellious because of lack of attention, too strict, assuming things, and having no trust. Children's responsibilities are going to school, having good grades, respecting their parents. Parents' duties are to make sure their children have a comfortable home, they're in school, learning their manners and getting respect from them. Parents should get involved with their children, academically and physically, so there would be a good relationship. My relationship with my parents is much better than before. I learned from my mistakes that taught me how to be independent and do my best, also with the help of my parents.

The Roles and Responsibilities of Parents, Kids, and Step-Parents

Kevin Rogers

Grade 12



In a perfect world there would only be two components that make up a family, parents and kids, but this is not a perfect world and parents do break up for various reasons and parents do remarry; when they remarry it puts another little "cog" into the machine we call a family. All the pieces of a family have their own little jobs and responsibilities in order to make the family work like a fine-tuned machine whether you have two pieces, parents and kids, or three pieces, parents step-parents, and kids; either way everyone has to work together and know their jobs or the family will break down . . .

. . . The children have two main jobs: to learn from the parents and be a pain in the parents' butts. The second part isn't really a job it just works out that kids are pains at times. At the start of the child's life the child's only job is to be dependent because they can't do anything else. As time goes on the child gets household responsibilities to make the parents' lives easier. The chores go from cleaning his or her room to cooking dinner. In some cases, the child has to take the roles of the provider at a very early age like high school years but it should not come to that.

A child's most important role should be to make mistakes and grow up because that is how people learn and become good people. As long as the child's teachers are good—by teachers I mean parents—their mistakes will be minor in the long run. The other big job a child has is to be a good person and make their parents proud to be parents.



The Changing Face of Marriage

Dan LaFlamme

Grade 12

 Growing up in the perfect house in the perfect neighborhood my life was great, but times do change, things do separate. Marriage has become less a ritual of love and more of a testing situation. people rush into marriage and find during its course that they are totally not compatible. The American family has become sort of a mockery in the sense of no longer in its former glory, where couples would meet, fall in love, and after a long time marry. I remember watching, as a child, shows on "Nick at Nite" and seeing how perfect the families seemed. The father would work while the wife stayed at home and cooked and cared for her children; that is how my life was until one word destroyed it forever – that word being DIVORCE.

Divorce is an awful thing to go through for parents and children if there are children involved. According to the National Center of Health Statistics in America, the divorce rate is 41%, and 10% of all adult Americans have been or are currently divorced.

In the classic family the parental units are the authority figures. They keep everything in line. The father is supposed to be the breadwinner but as

time progresses mothers are becoming breadwinners also. In the past, many women stayed home and cared for children and the home, but starting in the 1960s more and more women began working outside the home and this has become more prevalent today. I know few people whose mothers stay home. Parents are the glue that keep the family together. Even if there is only one parent the parent has to set rules and guide the child to be a good person.

Step-parents are usually awkward people, not in the sense of how they look but their presence is awkward. By observing some of my friends who live with step-parents, I see that the relationship is strained a little. The child knows not to get too close to this person because the child is cautious about the possibility of divorce in this marriage also, and the fact that this person is not the child's "biological parent" means that they feel like a visitor in the family setting.

Children are the reason families exist; without children it is not a family just a union between two loving people. A child solidifies the relationship and is a product of the love the couple shares. Children do not really have much responsibility – just to be loved and to love their parents. They should follow the ground rules that their parents set down for them and try to lead a healthy productive life.

In the end the American family unit has been tarnished. Marriages will still happen and hopefully succeed, but many are destined to end unhappily.



*"The right to disagree with the principal."
Grade 6 Student, Whitman Middle School, Seattle*