

**Op-Ed Editorial Assignment  
Final Essay (400 Points)**

**Directions:** For your final project for English, you will write a persuasive Op-Ed (Opinion-Editorial) that would appear in the Seattle Times, New York Times, or another major publication.

What your Op-Ed needs:

- You need to pick an issue and critique using logical arguments.
- You need to persuade the public to take a different position on the issue you choose
- You need to use multiple facts and arguments from research (cited)
- You need to use some sort of graph or chart to present data about your issue (graphs and charts must be cited as well.
- You must include a picture of some kind to accompany your article
- You will need to create an outline before you begin writing (50 points)
- You will need to write a rough draft that will be due on Wednesday of next week (100 points – only COMPLETED rough drafts will be counted)
- You will need to peer edit your essay in class (50 points)
- You will need to complete an effective final draft (200 points)

**Rubric:** Save this sheet and attach it to your final draft

**Op-Ed Rubric**

<b>Style</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Columns like a newspaper</li> <li>● Title, followed by publication and date</li> <li>● Effective Title</li> <li>● Transitions, logical organization</li> <li>● 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> Person is okay</li> </ul>	20 points	
<b>Introduction</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Attention-getter</li> <li>● Thesis statement: takes a stance about what <i>should</i> be done</li> </ul>	20 points	
<b>Refutation/Concession</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● An entire paragraph is devoted to the “other side” of the argument, or concessions are made throughout the essay</li> </ul>	20 points	
<b>Body Paragraphs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The order of the paragraph reflects the 3 points in the thesis</li> <li>● Each paragraph contains 2 citations of facts – no more, no less</li> <li>● Quotations &amp; facts are effectively introduced</li> </ul>	60 points (20 points/paragraph)	
<b>Conclusion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The main points are reviewed in a fresh manner</li> <li>● A memorable statement or question ends the paragraph</li> </ul>	20 points	
<b>Works Cited &amp; Citations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● MLA Style</li> <li>● 5+ credible sources in a works cited page (we’ll do this in-class)</li> <li>● “Internal citations” (Kearl).</li> </ul>	40 points	
<b>GUMPS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Grammar, usage, mechanics, punctuation, and spelling</li> </ul>	20 points	

Total points possible: \_\_\_\_\_/200



## Take Action to Reduce Teen Birth Rate

By Susan Tortolero, PhD January 25, 2009 Copyright 2009 Houston Chronicle



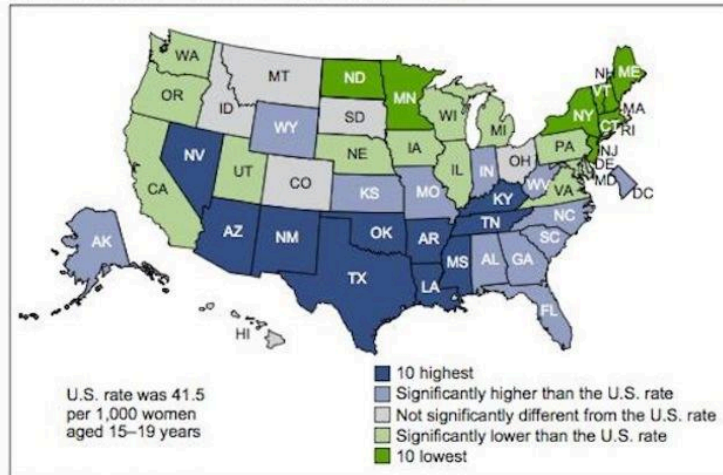
Texas now has one of the highest teen birth rates in the nation, and our teen pregnancy rate continues to climb. According to data released last week by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Texas teen birth rate increased from 61.3 to 63.1 per 1,000 girls from 2005 to 2006. The birth statistics are not surprising given that ten percent of sixth graders are sexually experienced. So are (by their own report) two out of three high school seniors. As many as 1 million teens in Texas have had sex and are at risk for a teenage pregnancy. Unless we make changes, the numbers are only going to get worse. As a state, we have been burying our heads in the sand on this issue. It's time to come out of hiding and discuss this important issue, however sensitive it may seem.

We have a moral obligation to put our differences aside and talk about what will really work to solve this problem. We need to stop putting the blame on young people for being "irresponsible." By ignoring the problem, it is we, the adults, and not the teens, who are shirking their responsibilities.

The human cost of teen pregnancy is enormous. The weight of the problem on our economy is huge. Teen births are estimated to cost Texas \$1 billion a year. The average annual cost of each teen birth is \$2,997. By lowering our teen birth rate by 31,000 teen pregnancies a year, to match New York's rate (25.7 per 1,000 girls), Texas would save \$93 million a year. If we could reduce our teen births to mirror the rate in the Netherlands, we would have 48,000 fewer pregnancies and save almost \$145 million a year. We have several options. We can continue to ignore the problem. We can keep throwing money at ineffective sexual education programs. Or we can take an approach that works.

We know how to reduce the teen birth rate. It has been done in the Netherlands and in France. It has been done elsewhere in the U.S., where ten states have teen birth rates that are at less than half of ours. What are these places doing that we aren't? They are giving young people the tools they need to avoid unintended pregnancies. Those tools are first, access to confidential preventive health care, and second, at school, effective and comprehensive sexual education.

Figure 1. Teenage birth rates for 15-19 year olds by State, 2008



NOTE: Data for 2008 are preliminary.  
SOURCE: CDC/NCHS, National Vital Statistics System.

It is time to act like responsible adults and do what is best for our teenagers.  
What can you do?

- Talk to teens early and often about how to make responsible decisions regarding their sexual health.
- Advocate for confidential preventive health services for teens.
- Request information about the sexuality education program used in your local school; tell the principal and school board you want effective, medically accurate, comprehensive programs that include information on both abstinence and contraception.
- Advocate for state-level funding for effective after-school and youth-development programs.

The teen pregnancy problem is not a political issue — it is a public health matter. Instead of blaming young people, let's teach them how to make healthy choices. It's time for us, the adults, to stand up and be a part of the solution. The health and success of our teens hinges on our ability to stand and work together.

## **Columbine: Whose Fault Is It?**

*by Marilyn Manson*

*Rollingstone Magazine, May 28, 1999*



It is sad to think that the first few people on earth needed no books, movies, games or music to inspire cold-blooded murder. The day that Cain bashed his brother Abel's brains in, the only motivation he needed was his own human disposition to violence. We have been exposed to cultural violence since our culture began.

A lot of people forget or never realize that I started my band as a criticism of these very issues of despair and hypocrisy. The name Marilyn Manson has never celebrated the sad fact that America puts killers on the cover of Time magazine, giving them as much notoriety as our favorite movie stars. From Jesse James to Charles Manson, the media, since their inception, have turned criminals into folk heroes. They just created two new ones when they plastered those dipshits Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris' pictures on the front of every newspaper. Don't be surprised if every kid who gets pushed around has two new idols.

We applaud the creation of a bomb whose sole purpose is to destroy all of mankind, and we grow up watching our president's brains splattered all over Texas. Times have not become more violent. They have just become more televised. Does anyone think the Civil War was the least bit civil? If television had existed, you could be sure they would have been there to cover it, or maybe even participate in it, like their violent car chase of Princess Di. Disgusting vultures looking for corpses, exploiting, screwing, filming and serving it up for our hungry appetites in a gluttonous display of endless human stupidity.

When it comes down to who's to blame for the high school murders in Littleton, Colorado, throw a rock and you'll hit someone who's guilty. We're the people who sit back and tolerate children owning guns, and we're the ones who tune in and watch the up-to-the-minute details of what they do with them. I think it's terrible when anyone dies, especially if it is someone you know and love. But what is more offensive is that when these tragedies happen, most people don't really care any more than they would about the season finale of Friends or The Real World. I was dumbfounded as I watched the media snake right in, not missing a teardrop, interviewing the parents of dead children, televising the funerals. Then came the witch hunt.

Man's greatest fear is chaos. It was unthinkable that these kids did not have a simple black-and-white reason for their actions. And so a scapegoat was needed. I remember hearing the initial reports from Littleton, that Harris and Klebold were wearing makeup and were dressed like Marilyn Manson, whom they obviously must worship, since they were dressed in black. Of course, speculation snowballed into making me the poster boy for everything that is bad in the world. These two idiots weren't wearing makeup, and they weren't dressed like me or like goths. Since Middle America has not heard of the music they did listen to (KMFDM and Rammstein, among others), the media picked something they thought was similar.

Responsible journalists have reported with less publicity that Harris and Klebold were not Marilyn Manson fans -- that they even disliked my music. Even if they were fans, that gives them no excuse, nor does it mean that music is to blame. Did we look for James Huberty's inspiration when he gunned down people at McDonald's? What did Timothy McVeigh like to watch? What about David Koresh, Jim Jones? Do you think entertainment inspired Kip Kinkel, or should we blame

the fact that his father bought him the guns he used in the Springfield, Oregon, murders? What inspires Bill Clinton to blow people up in Kosovo? Was it something that Monica Lewinsky said to him? Isn't killing just killing, regardless if it's in Vietnam or Jonesboro, Arkansas? Why do we justify one, just because it seems to be for the right reasons? Should there ever be a right reason? If a kid is old enough to drive a car or buy a gun, isn't he old enough to be held personally responsible for what he does with his car or gun? Or if he's a teenager, should someone else be blamed because he isn't as enlightened as an eighteen-year-old?



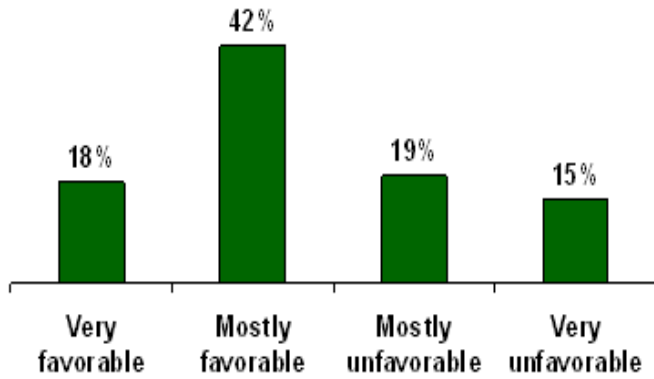
America loves to find an icon to hang its guilt on. But, admittedly, I have assumed the role of Antichrist; I am the Nineties voice of individuality, and people tend to associate anyone who looks and behaves differently with illegal or immoral activity. Deep down, most adults hate people who go against the grain. It's comical that people are naïve enough to have forgotten Elvis, Jim Morrison and Ozzy so quickly. All of them were subjected to the same age-old arguments, scrutiny and prejudice. I wrote a song called "Lunchbox," and some journalists have interpreted it as a song about guns. Ironically, the song is about being picked on and fighting back with my Kiss lunch box, which I used as a weapon on the playground. In 1979, metal lunch boxes were banned because they were considered dangerous weapons in the hands of delinquents. I also wrote a song called "Get Your Gunn." The title is spelled with two n's because the song was a reaction to the murder of Dr. David Gunn, who was killed in Florida by pro-life activists while I was living there. That was the ultimate hypocrisy I witnessed growing up: that these people killed someone in the name of being "pro-life."

The somewhat positive messages of these songs are usually the ones that sensationalists misinterpret as promoting the very things I am decrying. Right now, everyone is thinking of how they can prevent things like Littleton. How do you prevent AIDS, world war, depression, car crashes? We live in a free country, but with that freedom there is a burden of personal responsibility. Rather than teaching a child what is moral and immoral, right and wrong, we first and foremost can establish what the laws that govern us are. You can always escape hell by not believing in it, but you cannot escape death and you cannot escape prison.

It is no wonder that kids are growing up more cynical; they have a lot of information in front of them. They can see that they are living in a world that's made of bullshit. In the past, there was always the idea that you could turn and run and start something better. But now America has become one big mall, and because of the Internet and all of the technology we have, there's nowhere to run. People are the same everywhere. Sometimes music, movies and books are the only things that let us feel like someone else feels like we do. I've always tried to let people know it's OK, or better, if you don't fit into the program. Use your imagination -- if some geek from Ohio can become something, why can't anyone else with the willpower and creativity?

I chose not to jump into the media frenzy and defend myself, though I was begged to be on every single TV show in existence. I didn't want to contribute to these fame-seeking journalists and opportunists looking to fill their churches or to get elected because of their self-righteous finger-pointing. They want to blame entertainment? Isn't religion the first real entertainment? People dress up in costumes, sing songs and dedicate themselves in eternal fandom. Everyone will agree that nothing was more entertaining than Clinton shooting off his prick and then his bombs in true political form. And the news -- that's obvious. So is entertainment to blame? I'd like media commentators to ask themselves, because their coverage of the event was some of the most gruesome entertainment any of us have seen.

### Overall Opinion of the NRA



April 4-7, 2005

I think that the National Rifle Association is far too powerful to take on, so most people choose Doom, The Basketball Diaries or yours truly. This kind of controversy does not help me sell records or tickets, and I wouldn't want it to. I'm a controversial artist, one who dares to have an opinion and bothers to create music and videos that challenge people's ideas in a world that is watered-down and hollow. In my work I examine the America we live in, and I've always tried to show people that the devil we blame our atrocities on is really just each one of us. So don't expect the end of the world to come one day out of the blue -- it's been happening every day for a long time.