

DEFINITION

In talking with other people, we at times offer informal definitions to explain just what we mean by a particular term. Suppose, for example, we say to a friend, "Bob is really an inconsiderate person." We might then explain what we mean by "inconsiderate" by saying, "He borrowed my accounting book 'overnight,' but didn't return it for a week. And when I got it back, it was covered with coffee stains." In a written definition, we make clear in a more complete and formal way our own personal understanding of a term. Such a definition typically starts with one meaning of a term. The meaning is then illustrated with a series of details.

Definition of a Baseball Fan

What is a baseball fan? The word fan is an abbreviation for fanatic, meaning "insane." In the case of baseball fans, the term is appropriate. They behave insanely, they are insane about trivia, and they are insanely loyal.

Baseball fans wear their official team T shirts and warm-up jackets to the mall, the supermarket, the classroom, and even--if they can get away with it--to work. Then, whenever the team offers a giveaway item, the fans rush to the ball park to get the roll-up hat or tote bag that is being offered that day. Baseball fans behave insanely, especially between April and October. In addition, baseball fans cover the walls with items of every kind. When they go to a game, which they do as often as possible, the true baseball fans put on their team colors, grab their pennants, pin on their team buttons, and even bring along hand-lettered bedsheets proudly proclaiming "Go Dodgers" or "Braves Are Number 1." At the game, these fans form a rooting section, constantly encouraging their favorite players and obediently echoing every cheer flashed on the electronic scoreboard.

Baseball fans, in addition to behaving insanely, are also insanely fascinated by trivia. Every day, they turn to the sports page and study last night's statistics. They simply have to see who has extended his hitting streak and how many strikeouts the winning pitcher recorded. Their bookshelves are crammed with record books, team yearbooks, and baseball almanacs. They delight in remembering such significant facts as who was the last left-handed third baseman to hit into an inning-ending double play in the fifth game of the play-offs. And if you do not show equal interest or enthusiasm, they look at you as if they were doubting your sanity.

Last of all, baseball fans are insanely loyal to the team of their choice. Should the home team lose eight in a row, their fans may begin to call them "bums." They may even suggest, vocally, that the slumping cleanup hitter be sent to the minors or the manager fired. But these reactions only hide their broken hearts. They still check the sports pages and tune in to get the score. Furthermore, this intense loyalty makes fans dangerous, for anyone who dares to say to a loyal fan that some other team has sharper fielding or a better attitude could be risking permanent physical damage. Incidents of violence on the baseball field have increased in recent years and are a matter of growing concern.

From mid-October through March, baseball fans are like any other human beings. They pay their taxes, take out the garbage, and complain about the high cost of living or the latest home repair. But when April comes, the colors and radios go on, the record books come off the shelves, and the devotion returns. For the true baseball fan, another season of insanity has begun.

Shown below are an introduction, a thesis, and supporting points for an essay that defines the word *maturity*.

The Meaning of Maturity

Being a mature student does not mean being an old-timer. Maturity is not measured by the number of years a person has lived. Instead, the yardstick of maturity is marked by the qualities of self-denial, determination, and dependability.

Self-denial is an important quality in the mature student....

Determination is another characteristic of a mature student....

Although self-denial and determination are both vital, probably the most important measure of maturity is dependability.

Write an essay that defines one of the terms below:

Persistence	Soul	Gentleness	Innocence
Rebellion	Family	Depression	Freedom
Sense of humor	Responsibility	Obsession	Violence
Escape	Insecurity	Self-control	Shyness
Laziness	Assertiveness	Fear	Idealism
Danger	Jealousy	Arrogance	Christianity
Curiosity	Practicality	Conscience	
Common Sense	Nostalgia	Class	