

Year 8 English – An Independent Essay

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How Important is Patriotism?

Patriotism is the quality of being patriotic; a devotion to and vigorous support of one's country. It has intrigued both philosophers and political theorists for centuries. Some take a traditional view that a patriot is one who supports the country no matter what, defends the military and respects the flag. Others say patriotism is an overrated virtue that we should be citizens of the world first and loyal to the country second. Others say the true patriot is not afraid to criticize the government and work for change.

There are both advantages and disadvantages to patriotism. Some argue it is good and virtuous whilst others argue it is problematic and does more harm than good.

Some of the advantages of patriotism are that it protects that interest of the country and brings positive values and morals. Citizens love and respect for the country lead them to act in the best way for the country. The desire is for the country to thrive in the future. Patriotism also leads to freedom, justice, and equality, if practised reasonably. The government and its people usually work together for a better quality of life.

The problematic side of this is that being a patriot can blind a person of their country's crimes and deny unflattering truths about it. "I don't really buy into the concept of patriotism," said a 25-year-old independent in Pennsylvania. "I think it is often just thinly veiled racism and over-zealous nationalism, which I view as damaging." It is often hard to acknowledge that one's country has erred, perhaps even committed hideous crimes. Sometimes bad people masquerade as patriots and manipulate patriotic sentiments to serve their own ends.

Patriotism divides more people than it actually gathers. People who support different ideologies end up discriminated against, and some people may think certain lives are more important than others. This argument of irrationality is further reinforced by the argument the patriot does not judge their country objectively and is clouded by biases; and as rationality requires objective recognition of a country's strength, this position is in bad faith.

Some other disadvantages of patriotism are that some people argue that patriotism is not morally legitimate under two arguments - first, that patriotism promotes one's country's interests at the expense of other nations, through whatever means necessary. This is against any moral precept, as it violates the Golden Rule of "do unto others as you would have them do unto you".

This second argument stipulates that patriotism is morally questionable due to its irrationality. Those who are patriotic believe their country to be the best, even though only one country can objectively hold that position. This can bring conflict between people's beliefs and what people think is a morally good standard. This is when people start to get confused between Nationalism and Patriotism. Whilst patriotism is a love for your country, nationalism is nearly the same but with one difference. To be a nationalist you have to think your country to be above everyone else's and placing primary emphasis on promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations or supranational groups.

So although these arguments are plausible on the surface, there are stronger arguments that, although these things could happen some people can be more reasonable. You can be a patriot -

support your country, but you can also acknowledge when your country and government does wrong rather than focus only on the good your country does and ignore the more immoral side of the country. Being a real patriot and not a nationalist, meaning that the argument before about patriotism being morally questionable, is actually more describing the disadvantages of nationalism.

There can be advantages of patriotism. For example, patriotism is important in preserving and protecting the nation to make it a better place for all its citizens. Citizens work hard for the development of the country and what is in its best interests. As well as this, with patriotism comes great loyalty in your country which makes people create a society where they support, work hard, fight, and even die for the country. People become loyal to the nation and have the courage to defend their nation. For instance, in many of the wars around the world, especially the first and second World War, you could see everyone getting together and fighting for their country, sacrificing themselves for it. In these times there was a reason to be patriotic and if interpreted in the right way, patriotism can bring victory and peace to a country.

Other advantages of patriotism include patriotism upheld by the majority of people in the society and country bring people together and will promote the rule of law when coming with conflict resolutions and criminality in the community. This promotes peace among people in society. This means there will be more idea of what is morally good and with this comes the advantage of less crime and an idea of how to resolve it when it happens amongst a community.

Throughout my research, it has come to my attention that in present days less and less people are actually believing in patriotism. For instance, in very patriotic countries such as America, 20% of 18-25 year olds in America actually believe patriotism. In contrast, 65 year olds and older are great believers in patriotism, 80%. This might be due to the abundance of technology in the present day. With more and more people turning to social media, less and less people are actively practising patriotism. With older people, they experienced nearly no technology and were much more focused on the world around them and their country. Also, back in the 20th century there were an abundance of people still alive from WWII and those people would have had a great sense of responsibility and would come together more for their country.

In my opinion, looking at what I have learnt. Some countries generally find patriotism more important than others. I also think that patriotism is most important in times of need, such as in wars, where people feel the need to come together as a society and fight for their land, beliefs and people. Although in recent years, with the abundance of people turning to social media, less people feel that they want to be patriotic or actively practise it and with more conflict in the world, more and more people are questioning how patriotism is being interpreted. If it is used in some countries to blind people of the darker side of their country and the problems they are facing.

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