

Writing 121: Final Exam (Take Home Exam)

Directions: Read the following short essay. Then, answer the questions that follow. Type your answers in standard MLA format, and submit them when you come to the final exam on Tuesday at 11:30. No late versions will be accepted.

Your response should be entirely your own work. Do not conduct outside research to compose your answer. Including outside source material will result in an automatic failure of this portion of the exam.

The one exception to this is this: You are encouraged to visit [ThisIBelieve.org](http://thisibelieve.org) to explore the possible audience and purpose for this piece. You may also listen to an audio version of the piece there at <http://thisibelieve.org/essay/5561/>.

Write at least one but no more than two pages that respond to the questions at the end of the piece. Respond to the questions in any order you'd like, but don't number your answers. Instead, focus on making a short essay/response piece that flows well from start to finish, breaking paragraphs as needed. Introduce your piece and conclude it just as you would any essay. Make sure to provide evidence from the text as needed to prove your points; it will be helpful if you mention paragraph numbers, provided above. When quoting from the essay, use correct punctuation. Include this citation at the end of your piece, and use its information to inform your in-text citations:

Taw, Harold. "Finding Prosperity by Feeding Monkeys." *ThisIBelieve.Org*. National Public Radio. 14 Nov. 2005. Web. 10 March 2013.

"Finding Prosperity by Feeding Monkeys" by Harold Taw¹

1

I could say that I believe in America because it rewarded my family's hard work to overcome poverty. I could say that I believe in holding on to rituals and traditions because they helped us flourish in a new country. But these concepts are more concretely expressed this way: I believe in feeding monkeys on my birthday — something I've done without fail for 35 years.

2

When I was born, a blind, Buddhist monk living alone in the Burmese jungle predicted that my birth would bring great prosperity to the family. To ensure this prosperity, I was to feed monkeys on my birthday. While this sounds superstitious, the practice makes karmic sense. On a day normally given over to narcissism, I must consider my family and give nourishment to another living creature. The monk never meant for the ritual to be a burden. In the Burmese jungle, monkeys are as common as pigeons. He probably had to shoo them away from his sticky rice and mangoes. It was only in America that feeding monkeys meant violating the rules.

¹ Originally published on ThisIBelieve.Org/As heard on NPR's *All Things Considered*, Nov. 14, 2005

3 As a kid, I thought that was cool. I learned English through watching bad
television shows and I felt like Caine from Kung Fu, except I was the chosen warrior
sent to defend my family. Dad and I would go to the zoo early in the morning, just
the two of us. When the coast was clear, I would throw my contraband peanuts to
the monkeys.

4 I never had to explain myself until my 18th birthday. It was the first year I
didn't go with my father. I went with my friends and arrived 10 minutes after the
zoo gates closed.

5 "Please," I beseeched the zookeeper, "I feed monkeys for my family, not for
me. Can't you make an exception?"

6 "Go find a pet store," she said.

7 If only it were so easy. That time, I got lucky. I found out that a high school
classmate trained the monkeys for the movie Out of Africa, so he allowed me to feed
his monkey. I've had other close calls. Once a man with a pet monkey suspected that
my story was a ploy — that I was an animal rights activist out to liberate his
monkey. Another time, a zoo told me that outsiders could not feed their monkeys
without violating the zookeepers' collective bargaining agreement. In a pet store
once, I managed to feed a marmoset being kept in a birdcage. Another time, I was
asked to wear a biohazard suit to feed a laboratory monkey.

8 It's rarely easy and, yet, somehow I've found a way to feed a monkey every
year since I was born.

9 Our family has prospered in America. I believe that I have ensured this
prosperity by observing our family ritual and feeding monkeys on my birthday. Do I
believe that literally? Maybe. But I have faith in our family and I believe in honoring
that faith in anyway I can.

Questions:

- A). What is the thesis of this piece? Why do you think it appears where it does?
B). What form of essay do you think this is? Why is this style of writing effective for
achieving the author's major purpose?
C). Describe at least one choice that you think the writer made in constructing this
piece. Consider the effect that choice had on his audience.

Tips:

Do not include a summary of the piece as part of your discussion. Assume
your audience (me) has already read the piece thoroughly.

Focus on insightful commentary about the method of writing over
responding personally to the message of the story.

Consider whether you, personally, are the intended audience for the story
before you begin your response.