

Sample Paper 14

Score for Word Choice _____

Warning: for Adults Only

Did those words make you hesitate for a moment—or want to plunge right into my paper? Frankly, I think they’re misleading. When I see movie or television announcements that say, “Warning: This program contains adult language,” I always wonder what on earth the filmmakers or programmers are thinking. Do they really believe language that is unacceptable for *me* to use is perfectly fine for anyone over 18 or 21? Are they sending adolescents some subtle message that being “grown up” is defined by the right (and ability) to use foul language like there’s no tomorrow? Is this what “mature” people believe? If so, I respectfully disagree.

The very first time I saw the so-called “adult” language message, I was very young. I remember thinking, “This is going to be really boring. All they are going to talk about is taxes, bills, wrinkles, and hair loss.” Instead, the show was filled with what my grandmother would have called “gutter talk.” Aren’t adults supposed to express themselves in a mature, socially acceptable way? That’s what my parents tell me, but apparently they’ve got it wrong. I guess being “grown up” means finding a way to squeeze every conceivable obscenity into your writing or speech.

If we were truly mature, we’d develop a preference for thought-provoking entertainment. We would want to hear language used well—not in cynical or demeaning ways. As television and movie consumers, we should demand to be enlightened and educated. A little optimism or encouragement wouldn’t hurt, either. Must TV programs consistently broadcast horrifying, dangerous, and depressing stories?

Every now and then we might be interested in something more inspiring: tutoring nonreaders, providing medical aid to remote areas, rescuing endangered species, or discovering a breakthrough way to make food and water safe.

I know that by expressing these opinions I run the risk of being ridiculed by my peers. They've been conditioned to think of violence and foul language as entertainment—and filmmakers are only too happy to comply. Most programs these days don't require intelligent viewing. They don't call for any deep understanding or thoughtful interpretation—unless you count trying to figure out why people find them enjoyable. They don't stretch our imaginations or teach us words that are truly useful anywhere but on the street.

This could change. Someday, I want to see the "For adults only" label used to mean "Warning: This program will require you to think." That would be a truer, more respectful definition of maturity.