

# A Sample Definition Essay

**Directions:** Please read the definition essay on the following pages, and answer these questions

- 1) Find the thesis statement, the topic sentences, and the restatement of the thesis.
- 2) Why is the word “further” used in the thesis statement?

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- 3) How are the four topic sentences different from each other?

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- 4) How are the thesis statement and the restatement of the thesis different from each other?

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- 5) For variety, what other words are used instead of “dermatomyositis”?

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- 6) Find the following cohesion techniques:
- a) repetition of key terms
  - b) reference pronouns
  - c) ending the sentence with an idea and beginning the next sentence with the same idea
  - d) use of “another” and “other”
  - e) transitions (also, however, as well, etc.,)
  - f) summarizing the previous idea
  - g) beginning with if or a purpose / location / time / degree
  - h) words of commonness / uncommonness
  - i) in ... (people or %)

- 7) At the end of the symptoms paragraph, why are the words “symptoms” and “dermatomyositis” repeated?

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- 8) At the end of the treatment paragraph, why are the words “treatment” and “dermatomyositis” not repeated?

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## A Definition of Dermatomyositis

1           Dermatomyositis is a rare inflammatory disease that is characterized by skin rashes and  
2 the degeneration of muscles throughout the body. It is an autoimmune disorder in which the  
3 body's immune cells mistakenly attack the cells of the muscles, leading to inflammation of the  
4 muscle fibers and the skin. Statistics show that this condition most commonly affects adults,  
5 especially women, between the ages of 50 and 60; in fact, two-thirds of patients with  
6 dermatomyositis are middle-aged women. Children between 5 and 15 years of age are also  
7 susceptible to this disease. About half of all patients with dermatomyositis recover fully within a  
8 few years. However, in 30% of patients, the disease persists, causing muscle weakness and  
9 extreme fatigue, and in the remaining 20%, the disease affects the lungs and other vital organs,  
10 which may be fatal. Dermatomyositis can be further defined according to its causes, symptoms,  
11 diagnosis, and treatment.

12           Dermatomyositis has several causes. The most common cause of this autoimmune  
13 condition is a reaction to vaccines or certain drugs, including penicillamine, quinidine, and  
14 atorvastatin. In addition, dermatomyositis may result from bacterial or viral infections or from  
15 an inherited genetic defect. Less frequently, this disease is caused by cancer of an internal organ.

16           Dermatomyositis is characterized by a variety of symptoms. Early symptoms include a  
17 red rash on the bridge of the nose and cheeks as well as purple discoloration on the eyelids,  
18 which is known as "heliotrope" because it resembles the purple heliotrope flower. Reddish or  
19 purple patches may also appear on areas of the body that are exposed to the sun. Additionally,  
20 the patient experiences muscle weakness, which usually affects the shoulders and pelvis. The  
21 muscle weakness can lead to problems with walking and climbing stairs, and the patient may

22 have difficulty raising his arms over his head. In later stages of the disease, the joints may  
23 become painful and swollen, and carpal tunnel syndrome can occur. Other symptoms of  
24 advanced dermatomyositis may include difficulty swallowing, inflammation of the heart, and  
25 lung problems. In some cases, malignant tumors develop, although they rarely occur in children  
26 with this condition.

27         Several methods are available to diagnose this inflammatory disease. First, the patient's  
28 medical history is taken, and a complete physical examination is carried out. In addition, the  
29 doctor orders blood tests, which detect increased levels of muscle enzymes, such as creatine  
30 kinase, and autoantibodies, for example, ANA and anti-Mi-1. Besides these tests, the doctor also  
31 performs electromyography, or EMG, which involves inserting needle electrodes into the  
32 muscles to detect problems with their electrical activity. Another test that is sometimes used in  
33 the diagnosis of dermatomyositis is a muscle biopsy, in which a small piece of tissue is removed  
34 from a muscle for microscopic analysis.

35         Once the patient is diagnosed with dermatomyositis, treatment is available to relieve the  
36 symptoms. In order to reduce the inflammation, the doctor usually prescribes corticosteroids,  
37 and physical therapy is often necessary to prevent the muscles from scarring and shrinking as  
38 they heal. Immunosuppressant drugs may be taken as well. If tumors develop, they must be  
39 surgically removed or treated with chemotherapy.

40         In conclusion, dermatomyositis is an autoimmune inflammatory disease that can be  
41 understood in terms of its causes, symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment methods. This condition  
42 can be caused by a reaction to drugs, an infection, or a genetic defect. Early symptoms include a  
43 rash on the face and muscle weakness, while in later stages, the heart and lungs may be affected,  
44 which can be life-threatening. Blood tests, EMG, and a muscle biopsy are performed to diagnose

45 dermatomyositis, which is treated with corticosteroids and physical therapy.