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### Analysis Proposal

Throughout the readings for this class, it seems that war has played a huge role on shaping the idea of America. There are three themes that stand out the most. War promoted violence as entertainment for those not actually involved in war, as seen in *Battle Royal*. Some veterans have different feelings about war than what most imagine when they think of a veteran, as seen in *The War Prayer*. Some soldiers and other citizens notice the extremely large amount of innocent lives lost, as seen in *The Private History of a Campaign that Failed*. As our group discussed, based on our readings so far this semester, we have decided that war has played the largest role as the theme that has influenced the idea of America the most.

War is involved in everyday life for a lot of countries around the world today and especially America during this time period. I have examined three texts relating to this idea. They are *Battle Royal* by Ralph Ellison, *The War Prayer* by Mark Twain, and *The Private History of a Campaign that Failed* by Mark Twain. I have chosen the two by Mark Twain because they have a direct relationship with war involving America. I chose the other one, *Battle Royal*, because it shows how war has created an entertainment market for violence, most likely due to war being celebrated by a lot of wealthy United States citizens. I am certain we will have more reading assignments throughout this semester that will be useful in the analysis paper because they will probably follow the same theme I am covering with the current readings I have chosen.

When we decided on war as the theme for our analysis paper, we wanted to find something with which most Americans can relate. Since the United States of America was created from the Revolutionary War, it seems only appropriate that a lot of American culture at this time was based on war. Since there were a lot wars that the United States of America was intervening in around the time that most of these stories were written, some of them seem to have a common theme of war. We want our audience to learn that war was one of the biggest themes that shaped the idea of America during this time period. I will try to describe how war has influenced the majority of Americans. It could influence them in how they are entertained, how they view war as citizens, or even how they view war as soldiers. I certainly do not want to tell people how to think about this topic. However, I do want to educate them about why war is one of the most influential themes regarding the idea of America.

In *Battle Royal* by Ralph Ellison, the main character finds himself in a huge fighting match for the entertainment of the wealthy white men. War is glorified by many in this country in this time period, and even still today. Since war is glorified, a large quantity of the wealthy citizens find enjoyment in watching helpless African Americans fight each other. If war was not glorified, this would not be a problem at this time and it would not be the way many people view the idea of America. This is just a single key example of how war has indirectly influenced the idea of America in both this time period and today. There are other, more direct, examples of how war influenced the idea of America as well. For example, the soldiers in *The Private History of a Campaign that Failed*, by Mark Twain literally quit the war because of the amount of innocent lives being taken. This influenced these soldiers, along with probably a large quantity more, by removing their desire to be at war. Finally, in *The War Prayer*, by Mark Twain, the younger soldiers felt glorified by war, but the old veteran knew there was more to it than the

younger soldiers were aware. The prayer and the praise for the soldiers gave them unrealistic expectations about war. I believe the majority of Americans have the same unrealistic expectations about war because of the culture created by media about war both at this time period and today.

As briefly discussed above, war has been the most influential theme in the shaping of the idea of America. The three different stories I discussed will not likely be the only stories used in the final analysis paper about this topic. It is very likely we will read more stories that relate to war and American culture throughout this semester. The feelings of the majority of Americans regarding war differ depending on their personal interactions with it. Some people with no direct relationship glorify it. Some war veterans look at it with sadness and regret. Our goal in this final analysis paper is to show how war seriously influenced the idea of America.