

Why Are Veterans Special?

ESSAY CONTEST



Honoring America's Veterans

CASH AWARDS

Open to all Columbia Public Middle and High School Students

Sponsored by Harry S. Truman Memorial Veterans' Hospital

Contact your Principal, Writing Coordinators, English, Social Studies or Special Education Teachers for official guidelines and instructions.

- 250-500 words typed, double-spaced, on white paper, with your name and title on each page.
- Essay must be stapled to an official entry form with proper signatures.
- Deadline for submission is October 24, 2014.
- Questions may be referred to L. Stephen Gaither, VA Public Affairs Officer at (573) 814-6308 or L.Gaither@va.gov.

Why Are Veterans Special?

By Grace Gomez-Palacio

To answer this question, I think we first need to remember why the United States is so distinct. One answer is our unique rights that allow us certain freedoms and privileges. But how were these special rights earned and established? The American military had a large part to play since they fought courageously in several wars that have shaped this country we proudly call home. But who were these strong, dedicated people? Why are they so important to us?

Let's first start off with the basics. A person who once served in the armed forces is, by definition, a Veteran. But to me, a Veteran is much more than a former soldier. They are not just someone who has been a member of the army, but also pilots, captains, doctors, and nurses.

However, to me it always seemed that we are still leaving a very significant portion of people out of this acknowledgement. Although we ladies may not have taken part in the actual combat until more recently, the females of America have been helping as nurses, messengers, spies etc. In their own way, doing their part in creating the America we know today.

So now we know what a Veteran is. But after reading all of the above you most likely are still wondering why Veterans are so important. As I have mentioned before, it is truly all thanks to the Veterans that we now have the freedoms of today. Veterans have spent a good fraction of their lives fighting for the generations that come after them. They risked their lives hoping to make way for a better tomorrow, so the people who were not even alive yet could live in a better world.

And for that, I thank them. Let everyone remember the determined and bold, soldier or otherwise, for the amazing service they have committed to not only us, but our country as well.

Why Are Veterans Special?

By Grace Gomez-Palacio

Thank you for standing up, for never backing down in the face of danger. Thank you for letting me live my life as a citizen of the United States, no matter who I am, or what I look like. Thank you for my freedom.

Why are Veteran's Special?

Natalie James

Veterans are special because of what they did...

A veteran's main job while in the military was to defend our country and fight for our freedom. They accomplished this by learning how to fly planes, helicopters and fight as a team. They had to go through tough mental and physical training.

Veterans are special because of their sacrifices ...

Veterans knew that when they went to war, they might never come back. They also knew if they did come back, their lives could be dramatically changed. They didn't think twice about going onto the battle field, they knew that it was their duty to fight for their country.

Veterans are special because of who they are ...

They are special because they have the courage to fight. Veterans put other people before themselves. They protect their family and innocent people. When veterans went to enlist and serve, they wanted to be a part of something. They thought it was their duty to keep helping people even off the battle field. *Veterans* also have a special bond with other veterans. They help each other like they would their own family members and see each other as brothers and sisters. They don't abandon each other even outside of the battle field. They come to each other's aid when needed, even if they don't know each other.

Veterans are special because they have integrity and are modest. They know right from the wrong and do the right thing. Veterans don't want special treatment; they think that they did their job and they try to go on with life. Many people around us are veterans. My great uncle was a veteran, so is my second cousin.

Why are Veteran's Special?

Natalie James

Some veterans suffer from physical injuries or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), but they do their best to overcome the obstacles, and move on with life.

A wounded veteran said, "As a wounded vet you get called a 'hero' a lot. I've met heroes and I've met people that went above and beyond. And because of that, some of them aren't here today. That selfless service is at the core of what a hero is, in my opinion." To me all veterans are heroes, even if they don't call themselves heroes. They served our country and fought for our freedom.

Integrity, service, courage, duty, honor, commitment, country and sacrifice are the words associated with veterans. That's why veterans are special.

Why Are Veterans Special?

By Kaylee Faddis

My Grandpa is veteran. He was in the Navy during Vietnam, the long, hard battle for a breath of freedom. That bloody battlefield, cursed with war and death. You may think that we all have challenging days. But, our difficulties are nothing compared with what the veterans had to face each day during the war. It's time for you to hear the story from my lips of why veterans are special.

Veterans are special because they leave their families to fight for our country, for our freedom. They fight for us, their kids, their husbands or wives, and for the world.

Veterans are special because they put all of our needs before theirs.

Veterans are special because they go out into the battlefield proudly representing this country. Survival is one of their top priorities. Soldiers fight with every living thing in their being. They hope to soon see their beloved family once again. Sadly, not all veterans live to experience that one, most important wish. The veterans offer something very special to the war, and that's their lives. If it wasn't for them risking their lives for us we would have to be out on the battlefield. But, they make the sacrifice for us, so we can live another day in freedom.

Why Are Veterans Special? (page 2)

By Kaylee Faddis

We can visualize the pain of the veteran's families. It must feel like they are being shot through the heart when they get the heartbreaking news about a loved one's sacrifice. Losing the person you love and admire can be very depressing. We all probably know by now sometimes life is unpredictable.

As I write, someone in the endless war just had their life taken. This world is full of bitterness and sin. But, it's also full of brave veterans who love their families so much. It's that love that encourages them to step bravely out onto the battlefield.

Veterans Contest Essay

Andrew Yarbrough

Honorable Mention – Middle School Division

Core 1

All of my great grandpas were in the military, but I never had a chance to talk to them about their backgrounds. They never really liked to talk about fighting wars. They liked to talk about farming. I think that there was a lot of death and killing that they did not want to talk about. I don't think they wanted to talk about so much death, because it brought up images of the past. My grandfathers fought in World War II. They fought in Germany and Japan.

Veterans have kept our freedom. They have allowed us to listen to any music we want. They have allowed us to have any job we want. Veterans have allowed us to have our own government. They protected our freedom of speech. They

Andrew Yarbrough

have allowed us to have our own church. They have protected our laws. They protected our government and way of life.

Veterans are brave because they are deployed and are put in danger. They are leaving family and friends to go out with nothing but hope that they will come back. I think that they feel sadness, fear, and loyalty to their country. I think that to be out there for so long and so far from home, it would seem unending. Returning is like someone saying you are going to Six Flags that day, it is such a surprise to see your friends and family that some veterans would cry.

My grandfathers were heroes in the war. Even though they didn't get any medals, they went and fought full of fury for our country. Without them, we would not be the United

Andrew Yarbrough

States, and we wouldn't have freedom. Veterans are patriots, they have unlimited bravery.

We sleep soundly in our beds because rough men stand ready in the night visit violence on those who would do us harm-George Orwell

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Call to Arms by Kate Byars

I cannot think of a deterrent more powerful than the rocket's red glare and the bombs bursting in air. Few things could be more daunting than the risk of life and limb. Unless the camouflage gives you a superhuman ability to feel no fear and weather the storm, it stands to reason that the souls brave enough to put their lives on the line day in and day out in foreign territory are no average Joes.

They have lives and homes and families, sure, but there is something very basely different about veterans. Something that causes them to value the safety of their country over the safety of themselves. Something that drives them to feel so large an amount of patriotism coursing through their veins that they are willing to drop everything and heed the call to arms. Something that makes them special in ways that those of us incapable or unwilling of such courage cannot understand, and can only imagine.

In my family, there are many veterans. From World War II to Afghanistan, the veterans I know of hold a colorful history. For instance, my great uncle, Keith, who put his young life on the line to fight in Vietnam regardless of his desires, withstood the harsh realities of the war to protect our country as well as the backlash upon his return. My uncle Robb is still serving, and has left his two and three year old sons for tours in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Both are men who give me infinite amounts of teasing and ribbing, but both are also men who inspire me with their courage every day. They may seem like any other guy, raising their families and living their lives, but they faced a sort of danger many of us will never have to face. They have gone to war to make sure of that, keeping our country free and safe. Out of uniform, they are treated like anyone else, but bubbling under the surface is something so much more than ordinary. Something special, that leads them to great things. Something special, that makes this country truly the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Veterans Are Special Essay Contest
Evann Twitchell
Rock Bridge High School (grade 12)

Greater Love

"Greater love has no one than this- that he would lay down his life for his friends." John 15:13.

I believe one would be hard pressed to find a better example of this quote than in active duty military men and women as well as veterans. Veterans are unique because in an era often characterized by greed, their call to duty shines like a beacon of hope to a world that is becoming increasingly plagued by selfish pursuits. All soldiers are united in their willingness to lay down their lives, by means of time, separation from loved ones, and of course the ultimate sacrifice.

Veterans are extremely special people not only because of the extent of the sacrifices they have made, but also because of their motives behind what they have sacrificed. Veterans served their country not because of something they had been promised. They did not serve to lift themselves up or obtain a place of honor. On the contrary, their service comes out of a place of honor they hold within themselves. Their bravery, fidelity, compassion, and dedication make what they do and what they have given up all the more moving. This selfless drive shared among veterans is truly the greatest form of love. Whether it is a Love of one's country, a love of one's people, or a Love of what is right, this powerful, active love is what drives good to be fought for. It is what keeps truth from being compromised. In the wise words of Edmund Burke, "All that is needed for the forces of evil to triumph is for enough good men to do nothing." Veterans are the living proof of all the good men and women who refused to yield to evil, and instead fought vivaciously for what is right.

I've known two soldiers in my life. one was very young one was rather old. Both came from different cultures, and they couldn't have been more different, but it ended the same for them. Both gave their lives to the military, to the nation, and to all of of us back here. People talk about giving your life like there is only one way to do it, to die a hero. That is something that should be honored to die for your nation, but we often ignore the other way to give your life, the darker way, the man who comes back, but doesn't come back at all. We prop up our heroes and we ignore those who struggle every day with what they had to see and what they had to do, those who lost something of themselves out their. So for this veterans day I would like to honour those soldiers, the one's who lost themselves in the conflicts, those still quietly struggling with this new life, and those who have lost themselves in that struggle.

As I said I've known two soldiers in my life, and their is a stark contrast between the two. One of them is a pretty well known name around columbia U.S. Army specialist Sterling Wyatt. now I knew the family, but I can't realistically say we were close. What amazed me was just how much the community rallied around them, pro-war, anti-war everyone in this town recognized that sterling had been someone worthy of honoring.

My grandfather didn't die in combat. He died of liver cancer in a hospital. I don't know much about my grandfather, my dad never really liked talking about him, and I was too young to really understand. as I got older I realized that my dad didn't like talking about him because there wasn't much to say, My grandfather would never really let my dad know him, there were no glorious war stories to share when he came back from a tour of duty. He couldn't connect with his family. All he could do was drink and smoke. He gave his life quietly, he gave up family and peace of mind to serve us. There weren't any parades for him. He died in the hospital with a son who was just beginning to reconcile with and grandchildren who would never really know him.

But in the end no matter his flaws both he and his fellow serviceman Sterling Wyatt were willing to give everything they cared about. One was honored by the community, and one was forgotten by a resentful family, but in the end they were the same. They weren't superheroes, they were human beings who screwed up, and who hurt the ones they loved, but they both gave everything for what they cared about, and that is something we should all be able to respect.

Honorable Mention – High School Division

Ali Schrupp | Why Are Veterans Special?

I remember the emptiness in my chest as I struggled to breathe. I tried crying silently, but every attempt became useless with every sob I couldn't keep in. I watched my grandfather's casket being carried away with the American flag draped over it to represent the honor of his former service. Men in uniforms delivered it down the hall of the funeral home to go outside where a black hearse awaited their arrival to be taken to the graveyard. My mother held me close to her side as an attempt for comfort while I kept repeating the same words over and over in my head, "He could not be gone. Not yet."

My mother would keep trying to reassure me that he was in a better place, now. He had done his job here on earth and has now moved on to a place where he didn't need his oxygen tank and didn't have to worry about suffering. Of course, that only made me want to cry more for being so selfish by wishing he was still here with *me* to make *me* feel better.

Over the years, I have learned to respect his death, and instead of mourning over the greatest loss in my life, I have been able to reminisce in all the great things he had accomplished. He was honorably discharged from the Marines, fighting on the other side of the world for our freedom. He had seen things that would have given me nightmares for years from witnessing. He would wear his badges with pride and honor, making him an inspiration to little ones wanting to be as brave as him. But, in our family, he was more than just a veteran. He was special. He was a father, a husband, a brother, and grandfather. Despite his rough training, he was kind hearted and gentle towards the ones that loved him.

People don't generally think about all the training and work that go into protecting our country. They are underestimated. In fact, the majority of people go day-by-day trying to block out the fact that there is even war going on.

But, to me, my grandpa was a warrior and I have the utmost respect for veterans. They build up the courage and strength to do something to honor our country and bring us all freedom. I have the honor to say that my grandfather lived his life serving for others, whether it was out on the battlefield or in the house being a wonderful man to his family. Veterans are more than just fighters, but are needed men for their families.