

John Kennedy Toole
Age 15 Years
2226 Cambronne Street
New Orleans
Louisiana
Alcee Fortier High School
No. of Words 963

"DEMOCRACY IS WHAT WE MAKE IT"

In the 18th century soon after the great American Revolution had been won, another country tried and succeeded in throwing off the chains of tyranny. This was France. Although the French did not stage the first, most important revolution, they fought with all the courage and bravery they could muster.

And it seems strange that the French were inspired by some simple truths compiled by a philosopher named Rousseau. Today in the democratic existence of the West these words still live and will endure until life perishes from the earth. Rousseau stated his beliefs in a manner not unlike the famed American Declaration of Independence. After reasoning that "God had endowed man with certain inalienable rights and the reasoning powers to know these rights," he went a step farther; Rousseau's most famous truth is "that man also must use his reasoning power to establish a government suited to his needs."

The world found this "government-for-the-people" in democracy; it qualified as the one best means of man ruling himself.

True, in the world of 1800, democracy seemed a radical idea and somewhat senseless. It was not so senseless that democracies exist today, that dictatorships and autocracies have failed, that "divine right" rulers and despotic masters have paid with their lives and that the world has not yet found any governmental institution to replace the democracy. The democracies have triumphed because they are the governments under which God has planned that men should live. It is God's plan that man should exercise his free will.

John Kennedy Toole
Age 15 Years
2226 Cambronne Street
New Orleans
Louisiana
Alcee Fortier High School
No. of Words 965

If democracies fail, the fault lies in the hands of the people because they are the "musicians" that keep the democratic "symphony playing harmoniously." The importance of a democracy is that it functions only as well as its citizens manage it.

Democracies allow anyone to do as he wishes just so long as he does not interfere with the rights of others. Therefore, to make a success of our country, we must practice as well as preach consideration for the rights of others as well as our own. Too often undesirable citizens injure and almost destroy their own government by crime. If our democracy were working with 100% efficiency, everyone dutiful to the task of furthering our country's interests, prisons could be abolished along with the other unnecessary correctional centers of the nation.

Our next and perhaps most important duty in a democracy is to voice our hopes and opinions through representation. We, the people of the world's greatest nation, and greatest democracy, must exercise the utmost caution. Our voice in our government is our "hand at the helm," "our guidance at the wheel." In choosing representation, the citizen must be mentally equipped to weigh the merits and faults of those individuals seeking office; whether the office is a federal, state, city or local position, the same principles apply. We must remember that our vote can decide the future of our country as well as that for ourselves. When voting day arrives in the most sparsely populated rural area, the citizens of that vicinity must shoulder responsibility as small as it may seem. Corrupt officials and high-powered political groups can succeed in turning our country into a nation ruled by an autocratic minority if citizens don't use

John Kennedy Toole
Age 15 Years
2226 Cambonne Street
New Orleans
Louisiana
Alcee Fortier High School
No. of Words 963

their voting privileges correctly. Millions of dollars that may provide ammunition and supplies for our constant efforts to ward off anti-American sympathizers could be diverted to the pockets of power-crazed politicians. For these reasons and an innumerable host of others, we must constantly prepare ourselves to vote as enlightened and patriotic citizens.

A democracy can be likened to a football team. Each member is actively attempting to make his team succeed and win merit in the end. Each member has both his pride and the name of his team to uphold against the foe, whatever or whoever it may be.

Every year, every week, and every day there rises against democracy some new obstacle, be it a subversive movement or an all-out war. Democracies have become the brunt for the attacks of crazed dictators with roseate dreams of world domination and subjugation - dictators who would herd masses at their will and exercise absolute authority.

Immediately the resources and patriotism of the democracy are tapped. The citizens must fall into their positions as in the football team. The young men must be willing to risk life to preserve the finest form of government on earth.

Patriotism and support in democracies during wars have become stirring themes for novels. Love for their country is so admirably displayed by Americans that the War of 1812 was the last instance of foreign invasion upon America. In almost 140 years no enemy has taken American soil and kept it.

Obviously the Americans have earned for themselves an honorable position in world history. In 1776 they broke existing precedent by estab-

John Kennedy Toole
Age 15 Years
2226 Cambonne Street
New Orleans
Louisiana
Alcee Fortier High School
No. of Words 963

lishing a government "made by the people" and by making themselves responsible for upholding it. Their history - our history - may be called "from the first to the best," because today the country to which an entire world looks for solace and hope is the United States of America.

We have succeeded. Our country can be called great only because we have made it so. Today in the face of Communist tyranny, we must continue to uphold the principles of such leaders as Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and Dwight Eisenhower. Their untiring efforts have made a conglomerate of races, nationalities, and religions into a strong homogeneous United Nation.

Now it is up to every other American to continue his or her efforts to make democracy a cherished and enduring institution.

DEMOCRACY IS WHAT WE MAKE IT!