

“Bitter Bierce”

Examine the items below to see why Bierce earned his reputation.

- Here's a parody Bierce wrote of the National Anthem. He called his version the “Rational Anthem.”

My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of felony,
Of thee I sing--
Land where my fathers fried
Young witches and applied
Whips to the Quaker's hide
And made him spring.

My knavish country, thee,
Land where the thief is free,
Thy laws I love;
I love thy thieving bills

That tap the people's tills;
I love thy mob whose will's
All laws above.

Let Federal employees
And rings rob all they please,
The whole year long.
Let office-holders make
Their piles and judges rake
Our coin. For Jesus' sake,
Let's all go wrong!

- His book *The Devil's Dictionary* reveals his pessimism as he redefines familiar words. Below are several examples:

Absurdity (n):

A statement or belief manifestly inconsistent with one's own opinion.

Congratulation (n):

The civility of envy.

Conservative (n):

A statesman who is enamored of existing evils, as distinguished from the Liberal, who wishes to replace them with others.

Discussion (n):

A method of confirming others in their errors.

Happiness (n):

An agreeable sensation arising from contemplating the misery of another.

History (n):

An account, mostly false, of events unimportant, which are brought about by rulers mostly knaves, and soldiers mostly fools.

Philosophy (n):

A route of many roads leading from nowhere to nothing.

Saint (n):

A dead sinner revised and edited.

Zeal (n):

A certain nervous disorder afflicting the young and inexperienced.

NAME: _____
American Literature and Composition Honors
Ambrose Bierce
***The Devil's Dictionary* Assignment**

Directions: Create your own devilish definitions for **five** of the familiar terms that appear below. Type the definitions of these terms on a separate piece of paper in double-spaced 12 point Times New Roman font. Be sure to include the part of speech. The definition can be written in a phrase, a collection of phrases, or a sentence. Do not use the names of any individuals in your definition. Afterwards, choose one of the definitions to document and display to the class. Follow the rubric below.

Classroom

Boyfriend

Apps

Desk

Curfew

Driver's License

Tests

Date

Television

Grades

Engagement Ring

Texting

Valedictorian

Girlfriend

Video Games

Research Paper

Good Time

Selfies

Student

Love

Facebook

Homework

Romantic

Twitter

Select **one** of the definitions you created and document it on an 8.5 x 11 piece of typing paper. Please follow the requirements listed below:

_____ / 10 Points

- Creative and original definition for all five words (not “googled” or copied).
- Includes the parts of speech.
- No spelling or grammatical errors.
- Written in a phrase, phrases, or sentence.
- Reflects the cynicism of Bierce.

_____ / 2 Points

- Proves craftsmanship and written/typed/drawn in large letters on 8.5 x 11 piece of typing paper.
- Appealing design relative to the definition.

TOTAL:

_____ / 12 Points