

## Sample Student Essay

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English 103  
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### Final Draft

Although numerous judgments have been made by a countless number of parties about the life and music of Kurt Cobain, the lead singer of the late grunge rock band Nirvana, the statements made by Pastor Joe Schimmel in the article “This could be Heaven or this could be Hell!” are inconclusive at best and mostly ethnocentric from a Christian worldview. The level of argumentation used by the author seems to be definition through facts, yet they are mostly supported by the author’s value system. The author argues that Kurt Cobain is a devil worshipper, as well as many other coinciding negative accusations against his character. These arguments and accusations are inconclusive due to a lack of certainty and objectivity contained within the statements and evidence given by the author, as well as numerous questionable and misused pieces of evidence which are taken as fact. In the following text, Pastor Schimmel’s arguments and logic will be analyzed and debunked in order to disprove the claims he has made against the lead singer of Nirvana.

Pastor Schimmel makes the general claim in this text that Kurt Cobain was a devil worshipper and makes some claims with evidence to this conclusion. He states that “Cobain’s desire to be respected and accepted” drove him to “sell his soul to the Devil for the price of fame”. He also uses a selection from a work by Christopher Sanford, titled Kurt Cobain, which states that Cobain’s goal was to “get stoned and worship Satan”. He cites various practices of Cobain as being related to devil worship, such as Cobain possessing a headless statue of Mary, his vandalism of various churches and banks by spraying graffiti with phrases such as “God is Gay”, “Homo Sexual Sex Rules”, and “Abort Christ”. He also cites Cobain’s decorating his

apartment with bloody baby dolls hanging by nooses. Cobain's relationship with known occultist William Burroughs and his obsession with Anton LeVay, the founder of the Church of Satan and author of the Satanic Bible, are brought to light and used as a connection to Cobain's devil worship. The author ties these points loosely together to back up his accusation that Cobain was, in fact, a devil worshipper. (Schimmel)

Schimmel begins his arguments by claiming that Cobain was a devil worshipper, yet does not give a basic definition of devil worship before beginning to prove his point. This argument is not made by comparing evidence with a standardized consensus and definition of what devil worship is, but rather uses his evidence to create his own definition, therefore using circular reasoning to establish it. He states that "Cobain's desire to be respected and accepted" caused him to "sell his soul to the Devil" for fame. This claim is based on the author's opinion, and as he has little insight into the motives and emotional condition of Kurt Cobain during his early rock career, cannot be substantiated. The author quotes a statement by Cobain that his goal was "to get stoned and worship Satan". This quote is also taken from author Christopher Standford's text, Kurt Cobain, and is given no context from which it can be judged to be accurate. As this author is not listed as having any special insight or connection to Cobain's list, and his works do not hold special notoriety on the subject, his text cannot hold too much weight in the argument. There are also too many possible meanings to this quote that it cannot be used to prove that Cobain was a devil worshipper. The author also states various practices of Cobain as proving that he was a devil worshipper. These practices include owning a statue of Mary with the head cut off, spray-painting sayings like "God is Gay", "Homo Sexual Sex Rules", and "Abort Christ" on churches and banks, burning song lyrics on the porch of churches, destroying church noticeboards and expensive religious artifacts, and decorating his apartment with baby dolls hanging

by their necks, covered in blood. Cobain's practices listed here, even if accurate, could possibly be used to make value judgments inside the Christian world, but cannot be used to make factual judgments, and there are no standards set by the author to define devil worship. The author also judges Cobain's association with William Burroughs, a known occultist, and his "obsession" with Anton LeVay, the founder of the Church of Satan and the author of the Satanic Bible. Cobain's level of obsession, or even the existence of an obsession, is an unquantifiable claim, as it is not a factual claim but a value judgment. Also, these guilty-by-association conclusions cannot logically be used to prove Cobain's alleged practices of worshipping the devil. However insulting and offensive Cobain's actions and words may have been for the author, these claims that he has made are based on emotion and the general "knee-jerk" reaction from his preordained worldview. The conclusion that Kurt Cobain was a devil worshipper is unsubstantiated, in that, a definition of devil worship has not been established by the author and there are no direct proven instances of Cobain actually worshipping the devil. (Schimmel)

Schimmel moves on to claim that Kurt Cobain was a drug addict. The author claims that Cobain had a "special love for drugs" and that heroin was one of his drugs of choice. According to Rolling Stone Magazine, his appearance showed his drug use by his "sunken cheeks, pinned pupils, and scabbed and sallow skin". Upon his autopsy, according to Christopher Sanford's text, valium and a huge amount of heroin was found in his blood, and to support his drug habits, he dealt drugs and traded sex for drugs. The author also quotes from Nick Kent's work, The Dark Stuff, that Cobain's stomach problems were caused by his heroin and pain pill use. These few points may allude to Cobain using drugs, but surely do not point to a serious addiction. (Schimmel)

The author claims here that Cobain was a “known drug addict”. He cites various instances of Cobain’s alleged drug use, only one of which is substantiated by evidence, that being his autopsy. This instance proves Cobain used drugs in one instance, but it does not prove that he was a habitual user, or addict. His physical appearance listed in a Rolling Stone article can be considered nothing more than hearsay, as it does not prove drug addiction, or even drug use. Nick Kent cites Cobain’s “mysterious” stomach problems as being evidence for his drug use, yet has no physical evidence for this claim, therefore it also cannot be substantiated as proof. Even if the author had proven that Cobain had an addiction to various drugs, he makes no effort to show that drug addiction proves his overall claim that Cobain was a devil worshipper. The author uses unsubstantiated evidence as well as incomplete and flawed logic to attempt a connection to his main argument. (Schimmel)

Pastor Schimmel also addresses the question of Cobain’s sexual orientation, and claims that Cobain was a homosexual. The first piece of evidence used to prove this point is that Cobain admitted that he was “gay in spirit”, as well as Cobain saying that he “could probably be bisexual”. Cobain also admitted to having sex with three or four men. His wife also reinforces this claim by stating that he “made out with half the guys in Seattle”. He French-kissed his base player on Saturday Night Live and carried pornographic pictures depicting women doing various sexual acts with animals. Although Cobain’s statements, as well as his wife’s, might seem to prove Cobain’s homosexual orientation, they are not enough to prove a definite factual conclusion on this issue. (Schimmel)

Pastor Schimmel’s claim that Cobain was a homosexual is not well-developed and not properly supported by hard evidence. Also the author does not give a basic definition of homosexuality, whether it is proven by physical action, emotion, or some other form of evidence.

The quotes by Cobain that he was “definitely gay in spirit” and that he “probably could be bisexual” are not actual claims of Cobain’s homosexual orientation, but only a reference to his “spirit” and the possibility that he might be bisexual. His testimony here is not a verification of facts, but a conversation of philosophies and possibly emotions. These statements also have no context included with them, and therefore have little verifiable meaning. The claim that Cobain had admitted to a “close friend” that “he’d had sex with three or four men” is probably the closest thing to proof that Schimmel musters in his attack against Cobain’s lifestyle choices. Unfortunately, the author does not name this person, nor is his citation of the source where he found this information at all clear or cited correctly, which makes the source impossible to find. The claims made by his wife that Cobain “made out with half the guys in Seattle” is most likely blown out of proportion as there is a large number of men in Seattle and this author doubts that Cobain made out with fifty percent of them. I would assert that, even had Cobain made out with a significant amount of men in the Seattle area, this evidence is flawed in it being exaggerated and obviously must be discarded as sensationalism. In regard to Cobain French kissing his bass player on television, this single instance of recorded “homosexual” activity cannot be used to prove Cobain’s sexual orientation, and could have numerous errors in logic as Cobain may have done that for shock value, or some reason other than having homosexual tendencies. Again the author does not directly connect his claim that Cobain was a homosexual to his overall claim that he was a devil worshipper. The author continues to use vague terminology and loosely put together connections to support his arguments that Kurt Cobain was a devil worshipper, which in turn only show a narrow view of the world and overly biased and critical appraisal of Cobain’s life, and a desire to prove Cobain’s lack of “Christian character” without any proof and an extensive amount of emotionalism and unsupported slander. (Schimmel)

Pastor Schimmel supports his claim of Cobain's devil worship with the claim that Cobain had "a murderous heart" and was "deeply into the occult". The author supports his first claim by stating that Cobain desired and stated that he wanted to murder a journalist named Lynn Hirschberg for bashing his wife in Vanity Fair for her use of cocaine while pregnant. He states that Cobain also sought to harm Hirschberg by "enlisting the forces of Satan to do his bidding through black magic". The author also previously references Cobain's involvement with William Burroughs and Anton LaVey to back up his being "deeply involved in the occult". His conclusions are not totally unsubstantiated, as Cobain did claim to want to kill Hirschberg, although this does not prove anything about the condition of his heart, and the claim that he was "deeply into the occult" is fragmented at best. (Schimmel)

Pastor Schimmel further claims, albeit somewhat shortsightedly, that Cobain had "a murderous heart" and was "deeply into the occult", as well as using these to support his original accusation of devil worship. The author claims that Cobain threatened to kill a journalist, Lynn Hirschberg of Vanity Fair, for bashing his wife's cocaine use while she was pregnant. Although the author may think that this legitimizes his claim, I would assert that it isn't unreasonable for Cobain to have been seriously angry due to the journalist's intrusion into his personal affairs as well as his wife's, and it does not substantially prove that he had a "murderous heart", as he never committed murder that has been recorded. The author also claimed that Cobain was deeply into the occult, yet does not give any type of definition for this term. The author also states that Cobain was involved with William Burroughs, a known occultist, as well as obsessed with Antony LeVay, the father of the Church of Satan and the Satanic Bible, but I would challenge that this is not enough to show a deep involvement into the vague concept of the occult, and that judging Cobain on his associations is not conclusive to much in the way of factual evidence. The

author once again attempts to link Cobain's reaction to a journalist and his association with key figures in the occult world to bolster his claim that Cobain was a devil worshipper, yet his reasoning and claims are faulty and undefined which leads to his conclusion being unsubstantiated. (Schimmel)

Schimmel's final point that can be considered a claim is that Cobain was a hateful individual. The author cites that Cobain had to be pressured at one point not to kill his wife. He quotes Cobain saying that "ninety-nine percent of humanity could be shot" if it were up to him. Schimmel compares Cobain to Satan in that Satan was a murderer, according to the Bible, and Kurt Cobain had murderous desires. The author cites Cobain's behavior of spitting on his fans and saying derogatory things to them at shows. One biographer said that "Cobain lacked anything resembling an ethical centre". Schimmel claims that Cobain hated women and mistreated them on numerous occasions in brutal and demeaning ways. He allegedly tormented the other band members, who described him as "little Hitler" and "like living with the devil". Cobain supposedly attempted suicide on stage at one of their concerts. The author uses his wife's testimony, that he "had a lot of personal inner ... demons, a lot of frailties and physical ailments", to connect his hateful behavior with demonic influence. Schimmel claims that Cobain hated humanity and God and chafed at God's authority in his life. His conclusion that Cobain was hateful towards humanity is substantiated by his own admittance, but a lot of the evidence is biased and convoluted with Christian concepts, from which no conclusions should be drawn. (Schimmel)

The author next claims that Kurt Cobain was "a hateful individual" and attempts to connect this through his Christian beliefs to the claim that Cobain was a devil worshipper. Although instances of Cobain's anger towards his wife, other women, fans, and fellow band

members, as well as his own statements show that Cobain did in fact treat many of those around him with a hateful disregard for humanity, the author fails to enlist relevant logic to the argument that he was a devil worshipper. The author attempts to connect Cobain's hateful attitudes with a relationship to the demeanor of "the devil" with such concepts as the devil being a murderer so therefore Cobain's desire to murder can connect him to the devil and that his chafing at the Christian God's "authority" must mean that he was in league with the mystic creature known as the "devil". These types of spiritual and mystic arguments cannot be translated into a logical connection, therefore nullifying the relationship between his factual evidence of Cobain's hateful attitudes with the spiritual concepts of God and the devil. The insertion of the author's spiritual qualms with Cobain in the attempted form of logical reasoning causes his arguments to unravel and, as he continues down this path, to totally separate from any logical reasoning he had attempted at the beginning of the text. (Schimmel)

The author continues his text by indulging in an unorganized, although stylistic, comparison of the behaviors of Cobain with the behaviors of the biblical devil, both recorded in Christian Scriptures and generalized in the attitudes and statements of the author. The author begins this section of text by defining, as well as denouncing, Cobain's band name, Nirvana, which is the Hindu concept of heaven, which the author criticizes due to his judging the Hindu religion as "demonic". This unfair and prejudicial scrutiny of another religion smacks of a severe religious bias, even though it makes very little headway in the author's main argument, except to possibly connect the "demonic" status given to the concept of Nirvana to Cobain's choice of band names. The author connects Cobain's ultimate suicide to his being abandoned by the evil forces he served, and sites that "the devil" has been recorded as being tightly tied to instances of suicide recorded in Christian and Jewish scripture, by using examples such as Saul and Judas.

These colorful, though irrelevant, arguments attempt to once again link Cobain with devilish characteristics and with worshipping the devil, but I would also assert again that these arguments are illogical, prejudicial, and only relevant, if at all, in the realm of the Christian worldview. After eluding to his opinion that Cobain went to “hell” upon his suicide, the author lays at his feet, and that of modern “rock and rollers”, the many suicides taking place between the late fifties and modern times, mostly due to the “satanic” influence contained within their music and the effects it had on their listeners. These accusations all fall into the realm of being biased by the Christian worldview taken by the author, as well as being illogically put together and guilty of various ad hoc fallacies, and are therefore not relevant or appropriate in the realm of modern, logical argumentation. (Schimmel)

The statements made by Schimmel are both unsubstantiated and severely biased. His accusations and judgments made from a worldview completely different than the accused do not follow a line of logical thought or argumentation, and judge Cobain by standards that he does not accept as his lifestyle choice or his worldview. Though some of Schimmel’s basic factual statements may have some merit and truth, his overall judgment of Cobain, as well as the method and form of argument he makes, are truly lacking structure and logical thought, as well as being more of a value judgment, than a factual support that he was, in fact, a devil worshipper.

## Works Cited

Schimmel, Joe. "This could be Heaven or this could be Hell!" *JohnnyLeeClary.Com*. 11 October 2007. 11 October 2007. <<http://www.johnnyleeclary.com/nirvana.htm>>