

# Sample essay on a defense of abortion

[Family](#), [Parents](#)



Judith Jarvis Thomson's, "A Defense of Abortion," is a gritty view of how individuals see the topic of abortion. It calls upon both sides of abortion, acknowledging those who are against it, but also those who know it is necessary. As she compares fetuses to acorns, and pregnant mothers to kidnapped kidney donors, the readers gets a sense of what Thomson believes in. It becomes clear that she is for abortion, for several reasons. Thomson believes the mother has a right to defend herself, the mother has a right to life, and the mother has a right to decide what is going to happen to her body, among several other arguments.

Those who are against abortion often argue that once a woman becomes pregnant, her body is essentially no longer hers. She is merely a vessel for the baby she now harbors. However, Thomson argues that sometimes there are extenuating circumstances that circumvent this logic. Specifically, Thomson uses the example of a woman trapped inside a very small house with a rapidly growing child. Soon the woman will die because the child is expanding so quickly. However, the child will burst out of the house and walk away freely with few injuries. The metaphor is supposed to draw the reader's attention to the idea that the mother may be in danger because of the growing fetus within her. Though she acknowledges that both have a right to life, the example suggests that the mother's right to protect herself from harm, even at the cost of the fetus' life, supersedes the fetus' right to life. The example also helpfully acknowledges third-party involvement. Onlookers may be beside themselves to decide whom to save, believing it is not their place to choose whether the mother or the fetus lives. However, the mother has the right to choose because it is her life at stake. Therefore, she can

choose to involve a third party, i. e. a doctor, in the event of an abortion. However, if enough doctors oppose abortion based on public opinion and their own moral opposition, the availability of an abortion may be terminated, leaving women without the option. This action is called a an act of positive rights versus negative rights wherein the doctors opposing abortion are committing non-interference based on the woman's positive right to choose. If a woman chooses a service that a doctor can provide, he should provide it, lest he risk imposing negative rights upon the woman seeking an abortion.

Furthermore, Thomson believes that the mother has a right to life more so than the growing fetus. Thomson does not just mean the right to life, but the right to a quality of life. She compares pregnancy to the idea of being kidnapped and hooked to a concert violinist for nine months with medical equipment. The violinist's kidneys would be failing and, without your permission, you have been chosen to help the violinist survive. You are to lie in a bed with him until he is well. The example shows not only the unwillingness of some women to have a baby, but also the surprise, shock, and unpreparedness they feel. Their quality of life could be drastically changed, much like anybody else's, if they were forced to become was would fundamentally be considered an incubator based on the premise that it is not okay to kill a living thing. Thomson argues that though it is not okay to kill a living thing, it is also not okay to enforce one's objectives on another in such an extreme way. If anybody were ever kidnapped in the bizarre violinist scenario, the individual and society would be outraged. However, individuals seem to have no problem demanding that women hand over their bodies so

babies may be born.

Most assertively, Thomson argues that when concerning abortion, women alone have the right to decide what happens to their bodies. She acknowledges many of the opposition's arguments, including that abortion often considered murder depending on when we constitute the beginning of life. She goes on though, to defend a woman's right to choose, especially in severe cases, drawing upon the irrationality of the opposition. Rape is an example Thomson uses, stating that even if this were to occur, the opposition would not budge, but instead remain insistent that the mother must carry the life to full-term because it is what is morally decent. A life born out of rape, to begin with, may not be any life at all depending on the psychological wellbeing of the mother. She may not be in any fit state to care for a child. Morally, she was also denied the right to choose who entered her body, and now she is further denied the right to decide what exits it. In using the example, Thomson pokes a hole in the opposition's argument, showing they have no problem forcing moral obligations when convenient and overlooking them when permissible.

There were many astute arguments Thomson offered throughout her essay. In many ways, her essay reminded me of the libertarian view of abortions. Separate parties of libertarians both oppose and promote abortion. The majority of libertarians work to keep government officials out of the decision process while some pro-choice libertarians are happy to have the government's help as long as they agree with the movement. Thomson, like the libertarian party, accentuated both sides of the argument and attempted to show how each side thinks. Personally, I agree with her views. She was

able to include the opposition's arguments in her material and still appear logical when defending abortion. Additionally, the opposition appears woefully misinformed about the trials of pregnancy and womanhood. To offer morality and a right to life as the only real argument against abortion, while women obviously have the right to decide what happens to their bodies and to protect themselves makes the side to choose obvious. Perhaps most convincing of all was Thomson's violinist comparison. A scenario that would surely enrage any individual, it parallels pregnancy so perfectly it is difficult not to agree that only the conscious party involved should have a say in what goes on.

In sum, Judith Jarvis Thomson is for abortion. She uses many examples and metaphors to show that a woman is the only one involved in pregnancy who should be choosing what happens to the fetus. Her body is the most affected by the pregnancy, as well as her life, therefore, it is her decision. Cleverly, Thomson also uses examples that show a woman may involve third parties if she wishes. The essay also exposes the moral ambiguity those against abortion take on the matter. She defends a woman's right to fight for her life, her body, and her own choices thoroughly; I agree with what she argues.

## **References**

Thomson, Judith Jarvis. "A Defense of Abortion." *Intervention and Reflection: Basic Issues in Medical Ethics*, 1996: 69-80.