

# Drawing the portrait of success critical thinking example

[Business](#), [Management](#)



The aim of this essay is to present you with a definition on a concept which has been flirting with the human nature ever since the dawn of prehistoric times. If each word is to depict a notion widely accepted and shared within the borders of a speaking community, then the word ' success' has spread its meaning throughout centuries, changing meaning according to the ideals of each era and civilization. Success has been an ideal that has always been flirting with its being considered equal to happiness. People have always believed that a successful person is usually a happy person. But philosophy, psychology and social sciences have gone a long way to present people with an unquestionable truth. Happiness and success may be closely bonded notions but are independent in terms of keeping their own unique semantic field. When trying to define a word which has remained a solid value in people's lives no matter their historical period, a number of methods are used to contribute in successfully achieving the goal of its definition. A brief description of the word's historical background, a presentation of the word's semantic field in nowadays' global community, a number of examples or a comparison and contrast between different uses of the word. This essay will present you with a definition on success using mainly the method of examples since it is the examples set by people themselves which manage to make notions understandable and commonly received by people despite their language barriers, their differences in sociolinguistic backgrounds, their differences in their religious, educational or national backgrounds. It is often argued that a picture is like a thousand words. Paraphrasing this I would argue that an example can be like a thousand of synonyms, antonyms and definitions found in a dictionary.

## **The historical background of ‘ Success’**

The field of linguistics supports that words are born according to the needs of a speaking community. According to the Austrian-born philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, the limits of one’s language are the limits of his / her world. So, it is the main need for communication which gives birth to notions and words signifying them. Seen under this linguistic perspective, ‘ Success’ would not have been born unless it was an inner human need. Initially, ‘ success’ came as a word referring to people’s good outcome as far as their efforts were concerned. When their outcome was the one they desired then this was a successful result. In the Homeric period in Ancient Greece according to Homer’s works ‘ Iliad’ and ‘ Odyssey’, ‘ success’ depicted retrospectively, either the ideal of a good warrior who fights in the battle field ready to sacrifice his life in the name of his country or the voyager who after many years of wandering around and experiencing adventures, manages to return safely home having performed well in his trip. As simple as that.

It was later on, at the peak of Greek’s philosophy evolution when Aristotle devoted a great part of his thoughts and work on ‘ success’. In his Ethical theory he says that ‘ Living well means living one’s life under the guidance of the virtues of the soul. Since success is a perfect and self-sufficient objective, it must include the whole of life and all the most important virtues. Success in life, the best possible good for man, is therefore living one’s whole life in a rational way, under the guidance of the best virtues of the rational soul’.

Each philosophical movement gave its own definition of success depending on people’s arising needs. For example in the years of Renaissance within which the spiritual and cultural movement of Humanism was born since

people turned to enlightening their lives with the classical values of Ancient Greek and Roman civilizations, 'success' was equalized to being 'Homo Universalis', an active citizen of your society working for the common wealth. Nowadays an era characterized for its pluralism and contradictory ideas and beliefs, defining 'success' depends solely on the philosophical attitude one adopts towards the nature of life itself. There are no commonly shared opinions or ideals of great effect like in the past. On the contrary one could argue that nowadays the only ideal in power is the one of contradicting all the existing ones. Therefore, 'success' and its definition is mainly to be examined as a matter of personal interest and concern.

### **The semantic field of 'success' in nowadays' world**

It was a few years ago, in 1997, when the book of Alain De Botton 'How Proust Can Change Your Life' approached the issue of guiding people to find happiness in today's puzzling world. This is a book among numerous ones by modern philosophers who try to state their own thesis as far as what happiness ought to stand for. 'Success' is treated as an element of happiness and it is clear that they all agree upon one thing. 'Success' is a vague meaning which can only be defined if individual needs and ideals are to be taken into consideration.

The majority of people seem to have entered a ruthless hide and seek game in which winners are the ones who become successful in their professional field. In a society highly antagonistic, 'success' has been interpreted as one's ability to reach the top leaving the others behind and achieving his / her goal of professional career providing him / her with power, money and

social status.

Others appear to become obsessed with the effect of media in terms of trying to become famous. To those, 'success' is the synonym to fame and popularity. Once one becomes an idol or an image conquering people's everyday lives then this publicity is signified as 'success'.

Both the above mentioned examples define success as the best performance in the field one chooses to perform. Either in the work field or in social life, 'success' is to reach the top post.

These could be considered materialistic approaches of defining 'success' since in both cases 'success' generates material wealth, which is money and power of influence on social process.

On the other hand, there are spiritual and minimal approaches to 'success'. Religions and their followers define 'success' according to the rules and spiritual cores of their beliefs. For example, Christianity transforms 'success' into a personal spiritual process through which humans manage to get rid of their dependence on material wealth and comfort and devote their lives towards offering and sharing, having put personal interest aside. A 'successful' Christian is the one who manages to apply the ethical rules of Christianity in the everyday routine of his / her life on earth.

Philosophical movements either new, recent or older holding a legendary past, also keep their own theories on what is that defines 'success'. Nihilists for example may define 'success' as to never allow themselves to be interested in finding out what 'success' is. To them it is another trap of guiding people to lose the real meaning to life.

Age, according to psychologists, is of a major role to one's definition of '

success'. Whereas a young student finds an excellent grade in final exams to be 'success' since it is the passport to a respectful University or College, a mature adult who may have been through a number of personal misfortunes finds this nothing but a fake belief. Elderly usually define 'success' as their level of achieving their society's set goals. Every social system defines its own operational rules so if an individual believes that most of these rules were achieved in his / her lifetime then he / she may find their lives successful.

## **Conclusion**

'Success' is not an absolute meaning unaffected by the ethics and culture of each period of time. In the fourth book of his second oration against Verres, Cicero in Ancient Rome said 'O tempora, o mores' which stands for 'oh times, oh ethics'. Each time is characterized by its unique in complexity ethical system so 'success' like any notion carrying its own ethical, philosophical and sociological burden, stands for different definitions. But there is one thing which cannot be denied as far as human nature is concerned. Not one moment will there be in humans' historical route in which they will not try for the achievement of a goal. So 'success' could be widely acknowledged as the vague meaning of the achievement of a goal. Maybe trying for a goal is 'success' just by itself but there will always be those who will think themselves successful upon the outcome of their results.

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