# Mrs. Crawford *Survivor* Paragraph Analysis

**Directions:** Choose any **one** of the 23 harkness questions (listed below) to answer in a 10-sentence paragraph. Be sure to include the following components in this order:

1. **Attention Grabber:** a unique sentence that engages readers and relates to your topic. This can be a question, quote, statistic, or anecdote; it should be highly unique and specific.

Example: “According to statistics released by the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, 13.1 million cosmetic plastic surgery procedures--all elective and glamour-producing like nips, tucks, and lifts-- were performed last year, up 5 percent from 2010” (ASPS).

1. **Thesis:** your main idea. What your entire paragraph will prove.

Example: In his satiric novel *Surivivor*, published in 1999, Chuck Palahnuik predicts this increase in self-centered beauty enhancement. However, rattling about beneath the surface theme of celebrity allure are ones of isolation and false security caused by a superficial, conformist culture.

1. **2-3 quotes/specific details. Each with** set-up, connection to target of satire, and analysis

Example (of 1 of these): (set up): Palahnuik begins his critique of the appearance-obsessed American culture with the depiction of Tender’s employers, two people who care more about the way they look eating lobster and Tender’s ability to remove blood stains from a white carpet than they care about each other. (set up/quote): Tender, the Creedish narrator who has been trained by his cultish religion to please the rich, no matter how trivial their demands, explains: “According to my daily planner, I’m trying to keep my balance. I’m up at the top of a ladder with my arms full of fake flowers: roses, daisies, delphiniums” (Chapter 43). (analysis): The way in which Tender communicates with his employers (via daily planner or phone and never in person), the way in which his entire day is scheduled to maintain the superficial glamour of their lives (he cheats with fake flowers), and the way in which his goal (balance) and his life (chaos) conflict all reveal Palahnuik’s message: Americans spend more time and money looking good than actually feeling good.

1. **Conclusion sentence**:

Example: Tender’s employers’ values and later celebrity status reveal the obsession Americans have with appearance. Perhaps Palahnuik is correct when he suggests that we spend so much time “nipping and tucking” because the alternative “fix”—one of our character—is much more difficult to achieve.

1. How dangerous is conformity in modern American society? Give specific examples.
2. How does Palahnuik mock modern Americans’ conformity? Use textual examples.
3. Is there a danger in “blind faith” in any one religion or institution? Explain using specific examples from today’s society.
4. How does one’s religious preference affect their opportunities in America? Explain using specific examples (you could even look at how religion affects politics and this upcoming election).
5. How does Palahnuik mock blind faith in a religion or institution? Use textual examples.
6. What motivates modern Americans to care about others as well as themselves? How does community service fit into the American Dream? Explain using specific examples.
7. Is selfishness a part of the American Dream? Explain using specific examples.
8. How does Palahnuik mock self-centeredness in American society? Use textual examples.
9. How does the average American view death? Explain using specific examples.
10. How much has the lifespan of the average American increased in the past century? What has the average American done with these “extra years”?
11. How has this increased lifespan changed the American Dream? Explain using specific examples.
12. How does Palahnuik mock Americans’ preoccupation with death? Use textual examples.
13. At one point in the text, Tender says he is going through a “mini existential crisis”. What is an existential crisis? How does Tender experience an existential crisis? Use textual examples.
14. How would an existential crisis relate to your own life (what is the meaning of life and how do you go about finding it)? Explain using specific examples.
15. How does Palahnuik mock the notion of “existential crisis” in his book? Does Tender ever find meaning in his life? Use textual examples.
16. What is materialism and how does it affect the American Dream? Explain using specific examples.
17. What motivates one to be materialistic? Explain using specific examples.
18. How does Palahnuik mock materialism in his novel? Use textual examples.
19. How does Palahnuik mock hypocrisy in his novel? Use textual examples.
20. Do you agree that the superficial/trivial nature of education is the main theme of this book? Explain using specific textual evidence.
21. Who does Tender think is gullible in the novel? Are these people (himself included) truly naïve or do they get something out of pretending to be less knowledgeable than they actually are? Explain using specific textual evidence.
22. How is the concept of “learned helplessness” mocked in the book? Explain using specific textual evidence.
23. Palahnuik uses Tender’s agent to mock media exploitation of American individuals who can be put in the spotlight for their “five minutes of fame.” Give examples of media exploitation in 21st century American society. How does this exploitation affect the American dream? Explain using specific examples.