

Honesty in Writing

The following comments demonstrate writing that is unclear and dishonest. After each example is a sample of clearer and more honest writing, although the writer may not have all the answers.

Fabrication and lack of clarity:

Homeless people are the biggest problem facing the world today.

More clear and honest:

I saw a homeless woman on the street downtown. She was huddled up against a building with a blanket around her. I was walking with my family to a musical event. We were dressed up and bundled in our warm coats and eager for a fun evening. I noticed that the blanket wrapped around the woman was really bulky and I wondered what was under it. I tried not to stare, but my stomach clenched and I'm sure my mouth dropped when I realized there was a child under the blanket. I wondered if that was where they were sleeping tonight and whether they had anything to eat. We walked the rest of the way in silence as I wondered how big of a problem homelessness was in my own town. I decided I was going to find out more about what I can do.

Omission of information:

During the war, the people were angry and we didn't know who was responsible so I didn't do anything about the problem.

More clear and honest:

There are such confusing messages on the news about the war in Iraq. People on both sides of the issue speak angrily about the mistakes we're making. I don't know what the right answers are, but I feel bad that both American soldiers and Iraqis are getting killed. I wish the war would end and our soldiers would come home. I haven't done anything myself because I'm not sure what I can do, but I want to do something. So I'll start by reading more about the reasons we are there, and then maybe I'll write a letter.

Suggestive comment:

I'm not saying it was his fault, but we didn't have that problem before he took office, and now look at all the trouble we're in.



More clear and honest:

I heard my dad blame the governor for the loss of jobs in our state. He said the governor should have given money to the industries that were in trouble instead of paying for road repairs. I don't know if my dad is right, but I think it might be more complicated than that.

