Definition Essay:  
Student Example 3

Justice

Justice is currently defined by most people as moral rightness and the act administering the deserved punishment or reward to those who have earned it. Most people think of justice as being fair, when something is done wrong the wrongdoer is then fairly punished to create justice. One of the major problems is that justice should not be fair; justice should be equal. To be fair is not the same as to be equal. Fairness is simply defined as abiding by the rules and being unbiased. Should it be considered fair if someone gets punched and cannot punch back because it is against the rules, or should that someone be allowed to punch back to make it equal? Punching back is not a morally correct thing to do but it would be considered justice because it is an equal punishment.

The problem with the morally correct and deserved definition is that there is no longer any way to tell if something is truly morally correct or deserved. Morals seem to be most derived from religions, be it the Ten Commandments, the teachings of Buddha, or the philosophies of Allah. In the world today, religion is not as popular as it once was. Religion has diminished, changed, mutated, developed, and as a result has caused morals to change. What one person believes to be morally correct may not—and probably will not—be seen the same way as someone else. If there is no way to universally define what morally correct is then it cannot be expected that justice will be served morally correct. There is also no way to decide what is deserved. Deserved has the same problem as morally correct; there is no set definition, so justice cannot be expected to be a deserved punishment or reward.
Justice began as a name of those who dispensed judgment and punishment on those who had done wrong. This tradition began in England in c. 1200. From then on the word was broadened, being used as, not only the name for people, but for a concept. In 1303, *justice* began its meaning as the distribution of judgment. As the concept of justice changed, the word did not. In today’s world, justice is going in front of a judge, presenting a case, and being found guilty or not guilty—at least that’s how it is in the United States of America. A punishment which is pre-approved by the state and federal government is then given, this punishment is supposedly *morally correct* as well as a method of giving the criminal what is *deserved*. A problem is that this is not justice. Morally correct justice should not be seen as it is in the world today. Justice today should be more of an equilibrium than a morally correct punishment; “An eye for an eye,” as some would say. This quotation from Exodus 21:23-27, sums up nicely what few people believe as true justice, as an equilibrium created between the wrongdoer and the victim(s).

If a crime is committed it is not only fair, but just that that crime is equally paid. If money is stolen it should be given back in double, the original amount returned and the same amount taken from the thief. If a leg is shot, then the shooter needs a hole in their leg as well. If a hand is cut off, then the cutter needs to be missing a hand. Similarly, if a life is taken, then the murderer must suffer the same fate. This is justice—a punishment equal to the crime that was committed. This is not *morally correct*; there is no such thing as *morally correct* punishment because there is no one definition of *morally correct*. And it is not necessarily deserved either, because there is no true definition of deserved. By having equal punishments it would then be completely fair to all who needed to be punished. If a person even begins to think about committing a crime, they will know what their punishment will be. They will know that this punishment will equal their crime and that they will be brought to justice.
This raises very large questions about our current justice systems. One of the largest concerns is that when a crime is committed, is there true justice served in the courts in the United States of America? Or is it just an illusion to give its people the sense of fairness? At most the courts will send someone to death row, even if they have killed multiple victims or if they had first tortured them. The courts cannot kill the murderer multiple times, this is impossible. But they will not try to make him pay equally either. He will not be raped as his victims were, he will not starve as his victims did, he will not be beaten as his victims were, and he will not die slowly as his victims did. This murderer will sit on death row, and when his time comes, he will walk the green mile to a quick death. The government calls this justice. It is believed to be morally correct, deserved, and appropriate for the convict. His suffering will be no where near comparable to his victims, but his price will be seen as paid in the eyes of the courts. It will be considered as justice.

So is justice in the United States of America’s courts truly served? Justice can no longer be defined as morally correct and deserved because neither one of these definitions are defined in their own right; fairness is just shown when reaching a verdict or making a decision, not what the punishment is to be, and yet morally correct, deserved, and fair are what our judicial systems are based on. Justice should be seen as equal—equal punishment for crimes which have been committed.