

Kevin Hurt, "Ubuntu"

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The essay "Ubuntu" appears as a blog post on **Ed\*u\*ma\*ca\*tion: Reflections on teaching, learning, and technology**. Kevin Hurt is an English teacher in Washington state. Ubuntu is an African philosophical perspective. The term comes from the Bantu languages in the southern part of the African continent. An American academic, Michael Battle (Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu. Pilgrim Press, 2007. ISBN 978-0829811582) has also written about Ubuntu and his experiences with Bishop Desmond Tutu.

[Click here to read "Ubuntu."](#)

### Vocabulary

Read the "Ubuntu" essay first, quickly but thoroughly. After a quick read, please define these terms. You may use Wikipedia or an online dictionary, but please write the terms along with their definitions on a sheet of paper. The act of writing by hand helps you remember the definitions.

- Linux
- covenant
- maxim
- Bishop Desmond Tutu
- South Africa
- Zulu
- inextricably
- John Donne
- Immanuel Kant
- merely
- resilience
- impel
- Nelson Mandela
- transcendent
- empathy
- enact
- Stanlake J.W.T. Samkange
- inherent
- moral imperative

## Thinking Critically

Answer each questions as completely as you can, using well-formed sentences. Although there is no "correct" answer, please be sure to support your answer with evidence from the text.

1. Examine Hurt's introduction. What is the audience of his blog? How does his introduction engage or connect with his audience?
2. How does Hurt plan to use Ubuntu as one of the "guiding principles" in his classroom?
3. A heading is usually a short, descriptive phrase, usually bold and in a larger font size than the surrounding text. What headings does Hurt use? How do the headings help someone read the essay on a screen or possibly an iPhone? Are the headings descriptive of the text that follows?
4. Why do you think Hurt discusses a western writer (John Donne) and a philosopher (Immanuel Kant) in the definition of Ubuntu? What effect do you think this connection has on the audience.
5. According to the essay, what is Nelson Mandela's view of acquiring material wealth and how does Mandela's perspective connect with Ubuntu?
6. To what ethic does Hurt connect Ubuntu? What evidence does he use to support this connection? Do you think Hurt is accurate in his assessment?
7. What three guiding principles does Hurt describe in the application of Ubuntu? Is the organization of this section clear? What textual cues does Hurt provide?
8. In his conclusion, does Hurt connect Ubuntu implicitly or explicitly with his introduction? How effective is the conclusion?

## Writing Assignment

Read the following essay by Penelope Trunk, posted as an entry in her blog, The Brazen Careerist.

[Click here for Trunk's essay.](#)

The essay (blog entry) is called "Social Skills Matter More Than Ever So Here's How to Get Them."

Compare and contrast Hurt and Trunk's essays, both for content and tone. Trunk offers behavioral advice that seems congruent with Ubuntu. How are the underlying purposes of these two essays different, even though the resultant behavior may be similar? Does it matter?