

Essay #3 - Consumerism -- Who's Consuming Whom?

According to Jib Fowles, in his article "The Surface of the Advertisement," "Because the task of the messages [in advertising] is to change behavior, and the easiest, least resisted change in behaviors is in the direction of ideals, the images should usually be idealized depictions." So, what impact do these idealized images have on us and on our buying habits?

We live in a consumer culture where we have access to a wide range of goods and services such as food, clothing, household amenities, music, technological devices and so on. We can buy, whether we can afford it or not, almost anything we want anytime. Ted Lardner, editor of Exchanges, reminds us that "Even with the stratification of wealth in our society, the least well-off among us have access to a higher standard of living, to more goods and services, than comparable groups in other societies."

With this said, what is it then, that drives us to buy? Are we being manipulated by savvy marketers? Or are we outsmarting them and buying what we really "need"? If we are being manipulated by the pervasive and powerful media, how is this happening? And is this a healthy situation to be in as a consumer? What is the impact of buying things we don't need or can't afford?

For this essay, you will look at why we consume and the effects of such behavior. **In other words, your essay will focus on discussing two or three of the reasons why people consume and/or two or three of the effects of this.** You'll choose if you want to focus more on the causes or the effects of consuming, or you might want to look at both.

In order to support what you're saying in this essay, plan to use specific examples of print ads, TV commercials, TV personalities, from lyrics and music videos, movies, or sit coms. (You must have some combination of least **THREE** of these in addition to quotes from our reader, i.e. you'll need descriptions of three print ads, *or* two TV commercials and the lyrics from one song, and so on.) And, of course, you'll need to explain what these examples show.

Essay Requirements:

- ◆ An introduction that provides context for our topic, one that eases the reader into your essay;
- ◆ A thesis statement or controlling idea that takes a stand on the causes and/or effects of consumerism;
- ◆ Clear and provocative topic sentences that develop your thesis and deal with a cause or effect of consuming;
- ◆ Plenty of support from our reader (quotes, paraphrases, or summaries) your observations from the media forms (**at least three** that include the explicit and the implicit). You can also use your own observations from the personal consumer journal.
- ◆ Analysis of your support (What do your examples show?);
- ◆ A conclusion that offers ideas about what can be done about the situation, or what you want your readers to consider now that you've made your points.
- ◆ Strong sentences that are both grammatically correct and sophisticated (effectively use coordinators, subordinators, and **at least two appositives**).

Rough draft of at least 3 pages. DUE: 3/6 (MW class); 3/7 (TuTh Class).

Final draft of 3-5 pages, rough draft and notes attached. DUE: 3/8 (MW class); 3/9 (TuTh).