

Materialism as a  
providing theme in  
stuff is not salvation  
and dumpster diving  
no...

[Sociology](#), [Poverty](#)



“ Stuff is Not Salvation” by Anna Quindlen and “ Dumpster Diving” by Lars Eighner are both personal essays about materialism. In Eighner’s essay he describes how he is able to make living scavenging dumpsters and how individuals don’t appreciate things that are still useful and valuable. On the other hand, in Quindlen’s essay she writes about how she has more than what she really needs, but also focuses on individuals who don’t appreciate things that are still valuable and useful. Both essays share two similarities; first their point of views on individuals who do not appreciate valuable things and second the similar meaning found on their experiences of learning to appreciate things. The difference in the essays is that the authors come from different economic situations.

In both essays, both authors write about how many people disregard things that are still valuable, supporting the point that individuals don’t appreciate things that can still be usable. Eighner in his essay describes people who throw away good food, such as canned foods or a jar of nonorganic peanut butter that does not require refrigerating that people could have kept. While Quindlen in her essay describe people as selfish, because they buy more than what they really need. Such as buying a new pair of shoes, knowing you have 10 pairs sitting in the closet. Eighner states, “ I am not here by chance; the Dumpsters in this area are very rich. Students throw out many good things, including food” (33). While Quindlen states, “ A person in the United States replaces a cell phone every 16 months, not because the cell phone is old, but because it is oldish” (322). Both statements from the authors, support that people put more importance in getting the latest new cell phone

or throwing away a canned of beans, just to have the best out there or simply because we found an imperfection in a product.

Next, in both essays the authors also write about their personal experiences with learning to appreciate usable and valuable things. Eighner for instance, writes about how he started Dumpster diving one year before he became homeless. Even before he actually became homeless he had already learned to value things that were still usable. In Quindlen case, she realizes that having too much is like having nothing, and that it does not bring happiness when having too much. Eighner states, “ While Lizbeth and I were still living in the shack on Avenue B as my savings ran out, I put almost all my sporadic income into rent. The necessities of daily life I began to extract from Dumpsters” (32). While Quindlen states, “ The happiest families I know aren’t the ones with the most square footage, living in one of those cavernous houses with enough garage space to start a homeless shelter” (322). Finding value on things that are still valuable and learning to appreciate what you already have without asking for even more, helps an individual to appreciate more what they already own.

However, both authors shared a difference that proofs that no matter if you have more or less; appreciating what you already have is the important factor, despite the economic situation. For instance, Eighner writes about a homeless person who travels wherever he cans and survives from things that had been used. While Quindlen writes about an upper class girl that apparently has enough, but still searches for more. Eighner states, “ Many time in our travels I have lost everything but the clothes I was wearing and

Lizabeth" (40). Quindlen states, " I looked into my closet the other day and thought, why did I buy all this stuff" (322). Whether an object was worth money or was found free, it doesn't mean that it should be devalue, but instead we should search for a value to it.

Eighner's and Quindlen's essay both share the same meaning of learning to appreciate and value what you already have and not devalue things that are still usable just because of an imperfection found. Whether belonging to a low, middle, or high class, there is no difference in any kind of objects. Learning to appreciate will help us to learn to appreciate even those who surround us. If we find the materialistic things to be more important, we are going to find unhappiness.