

# Argumentative essay on we are a throw- away society

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It is no secret that America is the most wasteful nation in the world, according to EPA an American discards approximately 7 pounds of trash a day which translates to 236 million tons of garbage a year, this is a shocking statistic. The throw away culture is characterized by; overconsumption, excessive wastage, no recycling and of course huge mountains of garbage. Just what is the cause and evidence of this culture of waste? Many commentators point to manufacturers who use the 'planned obsolescence' strategy, the ever growing culture of consumerism and the obsession with convenience which have led to increasing amounts of garbage being generated.

The biggest piece of evidence that points to a throw away culture is the ever increasing mountain of trash as "garbage production in the United States has doubled in the last 30 years." (Kiss, 1) This garbage ranges from plastics, textile, electronics, car batteries and newspapers to name but a few. What about food? A recent study found that 40% of food is wasted along the production chain from the farms and right into the homes of Americans which translates to losses of about 43 Billion dollars annually. This is indeed a sad statistic because there are many starving people, some who are homeless and others barely surviving on welfare. As the dumpsites and landfills are starting to fill up, one wonders, just what is the cause of this dangerous culture?

Yet there are those who do not think that we are a throw-away society. They cite reasons such as it is a natural cycle of development where every nation will get to a point where goods are cheap and the citizens have money to buy the goods. Others say that getting rid of some items is the most

economic choice because repairs are expensive and buying new items is just easier not to mention cheaper, that it is simply logical. Grohol states that people have “ numerous methods of ridding themselves of objects, including giving things away, selling or even quietly forgetting them.” (1) This apparently points out to the fact that we are not a throw-away society but one that about how it disposes its items. Yet they choose to turn a blind eye to other indicators of throw-away culture such as planned obsolescence, the culture of consumerism and the incessant need for convenience.

Planned obsolescence is manufacturing goods that will not last for a long time which leads to consumers having to replace the items often. This strategy was developed after the Second World War after the emergence of mass production. The items that are most affected by this strategy includes electronics such as home appliances like microwaves, refrigerators, dishwashers and washing machines. Smith gives an example of computer operating system windows 98 for which the manufacturer does not provide support not because “ the product doesn't work, it's that the company wants you to buy the latest and greatest version of whatever they have.” She explains that the aim of this strategy is to create a constant market for the new goods that companies are producing after all who would buy a new microwave when the one they have lasts for 20 year? (1) The fact that most manufacturers outsource their production makes repairs very expensive making buying a new item cheaper than repairing it leading to increased throwing away of items which only need minor repairs.

The consumerism culture is alive and well in America, the famous mantra of “ Out with the old and in with the new” is applied every day. The rate at

which technological advancements occur enforces this mantra as “ changes in styles and new technologies gave way to new and improved products that were increasingly affordable to more people.” (Kiss, 1) Today smart phone companies like Samsung and Apple release at least two new models of phones and tablets each year. These releases are coupled with media campaigns that portray these gadgets as the ultimate symbol of being cool and hip. It is this kind of media conditioning which extends to all spheres of life from fashion to food, houses and even cars that leads to peer-pressure that makes people want to conform by buying these items fueling consumerism because the definition of hip changes all the time. The relatively low costs of these items and the willingness of people to spend money they don't have through credit cards has fueled this need for consumerism enabling people to buy more and more items that they don't necessarily need. What is never mentioned is where the outdated items go, they are mostly thrown away and it is therefore no wonder that 2, 060, 000 tons of the annual waste produced consists of electronic appliances. The need for convenience has grown with the growth of technology. This need for convenience goes hand in hand with disposability; today almost everything is disposable, from diapers, to utensils and even cameras. These disposable items churn out a lot of waste conveniences like take-out food, disposable utensils and pre-cooked meals inevitably lead to garbage. This has also brought out a new obsession with packaging even for items like fruit which makes Kennedy, a columnist, wonder “ What purpose did that extra layer of petrochemical veneer serve?” when he saw wrapped bananas and apples. (1) This has led to a situation whereby “ about 80 percent of U. S.

products are used once, then thrown away” (Kiss, 1) this provides further evidence that this is indeed a throw-away society

## REFERENCES

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