

Fast food nation essay

[Art & Culture](#), [Music](#)



Fast Food Nation Introduction Surprisingly, Fast Food Nation has totally changed the way that I view the fast food industry. In this all to real work by Eric Schlosser, the reader is taken on an exploration through the fast food industry and its many aspects. Despite the fact that many arguments are based on the boring stories that he narrates, this book was very informative to the blind American consumer, such as myself.

Schlosser tells the reader about the many steps that go into the production of a fast food meal. He also deals with the many topics that we, the fast food consumers, never even realize exist: meat and potato production, and the process of becoming a franchisee of a fast food joint. Changing the way that we simply view fast food seems to be the goal of this book.

Discussion Introducing the entire story with a segment about a classified under military base built on the inside of a mountain, Cheyenne Mountain was a very interesting approach. Schlosser used this segment to give the reader an example of exactly how important the fast food industry is to America.

Schlosser also begins to set the ground for the entire writing that is to follow: marketing, location and future. One important idea that is discussed is the idea that we, American society, do not trust some one that is a non-conformist thus helping industries sell products." Customers are drawn to familiar brands by an instinct to avoid the unknown. A brand offers a feeling of reassurance when its products are always and everywhere the same" (Schlosser, p 5) Many concepts are discussed and outlined, but the most important part of the fast food industry is the men (and women) that started this relatively recent food production method.

Introduction of the book is entirely about the men that began the fast food revolution; whether it was a local hot dog stand or a “ burger joint” in California. Many believe that the fast food revolution had its roots in the 1940’s when the McDonald brothers first started applying the assembly line method to the production of food, but this is not completely true. Granted, the McDonald brothers were ahead of their time, but the real fast food joint began with the appearance of the “ carhop” restaurants and the corner hotdog stands. One of the pioneer California hotdog stand owners was Carl Karcher. Then along came the McDonald brothers in the 1940’s using the assembly line method, along with paper products and no utensil method for the serving/eating of food. (FCC, web ref) Many of these entrepreneurs did not even attend college, some never even completed high school! Yet, for some reason the idea of a fast food restaurant was golden. Needless to say, the great success was primarily due to the methods in which these “ products” were sold.

Bringing children into the advertising market was a brilliant idea, and can be accredited to Walt Disney. After many years of striking, Walt was left at the bottom, barely able to keep his head above water. Managing to make videos for the Government helped to pave his way for the futuristic “ Tomorrowland”. This is where the products of the future were made viewable to the paying public. At the same time, old Army bud Ray Kroc was pushing the McDonald brothers into signing away the rights to franchising McDonalds all over the United States of America.” Nevertheless, Kroc convinced the brothers to sell him the rights to franchise McDonalds nationally” (Schlosser,

p 35)Kroc followed the idea of selling a product to children, and indirectly to the parents of the children.

One local McDonald's owner, Willard Scott, invented the idea of Ronald McDonald, a character that is more known to children than Mickey Mouse. The promotion of Ronald helped to drastically boost the sales of happy meals. Because of the boosted sales to children, the 1980's became known as " the decade of the child consumer" (Schlosser 43). The advertising to children has become so popular that many more industries have hopped aboard the bandwagon and begun to sell specifically to children. Marketers realized the shopping power that children possess and were able to capture it in time to send them to the top. The controversial use of school districts raises the hard to answer question: How do you know when to draw the line? For example, if Coke passed up the chance to advertise in schools because of a moral or ethical belief, Pepsi would definitely be there to scoop up the deal and have their logos plastered around school yards. Furthermore, Schlosser gives us a peek inside the life of a struggling cattle rancher in a growing metropolis. Hank, forty-two year old rancher that was raised on a cattle farm, took our author on a tour of his property in Colorado Springs. Years later, Hank ends his own life because of the pressures associated with raising cattle and trying to survive in the competitive market. " Hank was under enormous pressure at the time of his death" (Schlosser 146). In reality, Hank was not the first cattle farmer to take his life. He is only one of the many farmers that feel the pressures associated with competing along side the large industrial farming plants.

Another industry that has been taken over by the “ industrial giant” is the chicken industry. Because of the demand for small chicken pieces and not the whole chicken, most large factories have begun to obtain contracts with fast food industries. This corporate takeover of the chicken industry has forced out the independent farmer, but as of yet no government action has been taken to protect the “ little” farmers. Chapter seven sheds a little light on the inhumane aspects of industrialized cattle farming. The stench that is given off by the cattle, who defecate fifty pounds a day, is absolutely disgusting and fills the air permanently. The inhumane practices that are associated with the raising of cattle are most visible in the slaughterhouse. Theorists ViewsTheorists and pundits like Karl Marx and Durkheim sometimes use the term “ fast food” to denigrate American habits, institutions, and values, referring to them as elements of a “ fast-food society.” In fact, “ fast-food” has become a frequently used adjective, implying not only ready availability but also superficiality, mass-produced standardization, lack of authenticity, or just poor quality.

According to Karl Marx the traditional view of the society is towards Capitalism and Fast Food Chains are a part of the capitalist society. They are here to earn profits without having any interest in overall health of the society. The rise of food borne illnesses has been on the increase over the past decade.

This is due to the fact that the nation has developed central centers for the processing of meat, dairy and wheat products. One contaminant can infect a huge amount of product. From these centers foods are packaged and sent

throughout the entire nation, spreading the diseases from coast to coast. During the 1920's, hamburgers took on a "wrap" as being unsanitary and food for the poor, but time would prove this wrong. "White Castle Hamburgers" conducted an experiment that helped to release the hamburger from any bad myths that had followed it. (Dugger, p 2) This is one of the first times that the preparation of meat was proven to aid in the cleanliness of meat preparation.

E. coli is one of the many pathogens that is spread from the slaughter houses throughout the nation. This is a disease that can kill, so it is very important that food is prepared in a clean and sanitary surrounding. A majority of the fast food restaurants have opened more franchises in foreign countries.

This is in hopes that the global expansion will generate more money for the corporations and their employees. The many symbols that these fast food restaurants bring along with them have introduced more global symbols of understanding and unity." McDonalds now ranks as the most widely recognized brand in the world, more familiar than Coca-Cola" (Schlosser, p 3788) This "Americanization" of the world has led not only fast food, but television, music and "pop-culture" to the far reaches of the world. In America the battle is no longer against the iron-fist of Russia, but against the large increase of obesity. (FSRG, web ref) In the future will the America we know and love change to something that is horrid to look at? Or is the expansion of our fast food going to have such a dramatic toll on other nations as well? Conclusion In conclusion, understanding is what we should all

strive for. I mean that we all need to find the truth behind the locked door. Eric Schlosser is able to bring home the reality of the American fast food industry in a way that really strikes the reader.

Reading this has really opened my eyes to the way that I view a fast food restaurant. Of course, I'll still eat fast food; but at least now I understand a few of the processes that go into the making of the fried meal down on my wrapper and how my contribution to the fast food industry affects the entire country. Trusting someone that is a non-conformist might be a little scary, but it leads to change. It takes the actions of a few brave people to begin to make a change. These generative actions are meant to challenge the recursive practices that we have all play a role in. Change is not easy, but is essential to the survival of our culture. Works Cited Schlosser, Eric. *Fast Food Nation*, New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc.

(2002) Schlosser, Eric. "Behind the Counter", *The Presence of Others*. New York: Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2004. 3787- 791. FCC, "FCC Consumer Facts", 19 July 2006, Federal Communications Commission <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/childtv.html>; gt;. 26 Mar. 2007

Dugger, Ashlee.

Personal Interview, 10 April. 2007, p 2FSRG, "Fast Food Survey - May 2006".

May 2007. Food Surveys Research Group.;