

Frazier vs twitchell essay



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Two authors that have written about American consumerism, James Twitchell and Ian Frazier, have two different ways of expressing their thoughts in their essays even though the two topics are similar. In Twitchell's essay, "Two Cheers for Materialism", he expresses his views in a different way than Frazier does by taking a more serious approach.

Frazier on the other hand, attempts a more comical view of the issue in his essay "All Consuming Patriotism". However different their essays may be, they still both bring attention to our nation's obsession with consumerism. Twitchell criticizes consumerism, or as he would put it, a "mallcondo culture" using a series of facts and quotes from multiple sources. Mostly everything he argues is not just his opinion on the matter, but rather outside facts and his take on them. Twitchell notes that all humans, in all cultures love "things", but America is still considered the nation of consumers because we have much more stuff than most other places in the world. He focuses on the fact that the issue of commercialism has always been a more Western idea and mentions how our consumer culture is blamed for many things, such as eating disorders, depression, and other things of that sort. However, his belief is that commercialism contributes to the problem and does not directly cause it. He seems fond of the idea that Americans have "spent their way to happiness", even though some say that money cannot bring one happiness. Twitchell ends the essay by reassuring us about his views on the matter. He views the process of consumption as creative and emancipating because it frees us from the strictures of social class.

He also believes that our commercialist culture is on its way to becoming the culture of the world. Frazier on the other hand, uses a more comical approach in "All Consuming Patriotism". He thinks that we show our patriotism to our country by going out and shopping to support America. He views America's consumerism as something that is necessary; something that is considered a civic duty in our nation's time of need.

He reaches into history to show the differences between Americans back during the Civil War and now to highlight how differently Americans view our country and what we can do for it. When the country was in need, the women would make and send supplies. These days when our country is in need, we go out and buy. What people did during the Civil War far exceeds what we do now in terms of actually contributing to helping the soldiers.

Even though we all feel patriotic, it surfaces itself in different ways in this time. He concludes with the thought that Americans have a desire to do something, however, what many do is put American flags in their windows and on their cars. He says if we want to go somewhere to help our country, the mall is not the place because "citizen is honorable; shopper is not". Each author is attempting to sell their specific belief, but in very different ways. Twitchell uses solid facts and a mature voice to get his point across. He intertwines his thoughts with facts from outside resources.

In contrast, Frazier bases a large portion of his essay on his personal beliefs and attempts to show his views through humor. Although the topics of their essays are similar, Twitchell has the more appealing argument. Twitchell's argument is more convincing and he can be seen as the better salesperson

because he seems to have back up to his statements. He does not just give his opinion and hope the reader will accept and agree with it. For instance, he takes facts from anthropologists and historians, quotes Karl Marx from *The Communist Manifesto*, and comments on Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. What makes his argument so alluring is the fact that he does not shoot down consumerism completely but views it as misunderstood and a compliment to the problem, not the cause.

He does not make the reader feel selfish about feeling the need to buy things to validate where we stand in society but says that "commercialism has lessened pain", meaning we have more pleasure in our lives compared to discomfort in our lives than most people throughout history. He goes on to discuss another work of literature, *Pursuing Happiness*, by Stanley Lebergott. In regard to this, he agrees that Americans buy their way to happiness. Also within this book, he remarks on the statistics of American consumption on a wide range of products which the reader can identify with considering everyone has bought something at some point in their lives. Perhaps the most defining argument within his essay is the fact that he believes our consumer culture is so powerful because it frees us from the trictures of social class. Because it is so possible for many Americans to acquire goods, it is hence possible for everyone to be a part of the "in crowd" Even though Twitchell's argument is more convincing and he is the better salesman, I feel more closely aligned with Frazier's "All Consuming Patriotism".

The reason for this is not because I am an overly materialistic person who feels the need to shop when our country is in need of help. It is rather because I feel it is true that Americans do not know what we can do when

our country is not doing well. After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the president said that he wanted the citizens of the United States to not stop shopping, and other advertisements have encouraged family vacations. Meanwhile, during the Civil War, women were directly contributing by making and sending supplies while raising money.

I agree with the fact that he says shopping is not the way to contribute, but we do not know how else we can help.