

# Hazards and benefits of science and technology essay sample

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Walking down a busy street you can see the effects of science and technology at every glance you take. It's in the shoes that you are wearing, the cell phone that you are using to stay in touch with your family and friends, it's in the breakfast sandwich and yogurt parfait that was just ordered from McDonalds, it's in the headlines of the news papers that read ? Bin Laden Captured Alive?, and it's even in the air that we breathe as a public bus drives past us. It is very easy to see that science and technology affect our lives every day and a lot of the time we are not even aware of it. For many people, they do not even know that science and technology are having such a profound effect on their everyday lives. While I do believe that science and technology are very vital to our everyday lives, I do think that there are some areas where the advancements are not always necessary.

? Scientists have inserted `antifreeze? protein genes from flounder into the genetic code of tomatoes to protect the fruit from frost damage? (Rifkin 290). To me this small section that rants on about the possible dangers of genetically altering plants to make them more resistant to natural elements is enough to make me question what exactly is being done to these plants. I do admit that I did have previous knowledge of the fact that plants have been altered but I did not know to what extent that this was happening. I think that it is very disturbing to think that ? Chinese hamster genes have been inserted into the genome of tobacco plants to increase sterol production? (Rifkin 291) or that ? chicken genes have been inserted into potatoes to increase disease resistance? (Rifkin 291). In light of this new information I know that the next time that I go to eat a baked potato, I will

most likely be thinking about the chicken genes that have been pumped into it.

I think that genetically altering plants is not a good idea because of the repercussions that could possibly happen do to the altering. Rifkin also brings this up in his article sighting how the insurance companies warned against letting genetically altered plants out of a controlled area because it could possibly lead to horrible consequences (Rifkin 293). In light of this news it seems somewhat careless for companies to still use these methods, only to better themselves financially. But there are some advantages to being able to plant genetically altered plants. In theory, if the plants are more resistant to disease then farmers will be able to plant the same amount of plants as before but yield a higher output; therefore, one would somewhat assume that with an extra surplus of crops that issues such as world hunger and famine would be able to be aided. This is only in theory and that the farmers or companies would be willing to sell the crops at a reasonable price for everyone and possibly lose profit. I think that the chances of this actually happening are very slim.

Jeremy Rifkin's article is somewhat one-sided when reading it. He seems to only focus on the negative aspects, and never mentions the possible positive aspects that could come from genetically engineering and altering of plants. However I do think that the negative aspects outweigh the possible positive aspects. To me taking risks with something as necessary as agriculture is just taking too much of a risk.

But where would we be without the advancements that science and technology have provided us with. One hundred years ago the most common cause of death was influenza, but thanks to advances in medical technology, it is no longer such a major concern. It is hard to believe that only forty years ago the world that we know of computers with wireless internet, being able to communicate with anyone practically effortlessly with cell phones, e-mail, and instant messaging services, and other daily conveniences would not have even existed or would have been imaginable. Without these advancements and countless other ones our lives would be extremely different than they are now. It is that point that J. Michael Bishop is trying to get across to the audience in his article ? Enemies of Promise?. A man of science, Bishop, is frustrated with the somewhat constant questioning of whether or not science and technology are really beneficial to our lives.

While I found the article to be somewhat one-sided, much like the previous article, I did think that very good points were brought up about the way that the science and technology community are viewed. ? Critics [such as Brown and Lamm] blame science for what are actually the failures of individuals or society to use the knowledge that science has provided. The blame is misplaced. Science has produced the vaccines required to control many childhood infections in the United States, but our nation has failed to deploy properly those vaccines? (Bishop 282). I think that Bishop brings up a very good point in this passage. I believe that when anything goes wrong with something that is slightly related to science or technology, those subjects are the first to hit the chopping block. Very often the advancements that were gained from taking these unpredictable risks are ones that better our

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everyday lives and existence. If it were not for someone taking these risks then there is no possible way to be able to tell how our lives would be.

When interviewing my grandfather about the advancements that science and technology has made, he offered me very good insight in looking at the strain that is placed upon these two subjects. He stated that he does think that the advancements have been positive, ? However, there have been some drawbacks to this progress. A lot of pressure has been applied for more drugs to be developed in shorter periods of time and with less time being spent to insure that the drugs are safe for human consumption (Halper).? Another excellent point was brought up in the interview when asked about whether or not he thought that the criticism that is often placed on science and technology was fair or not. He stated that the criticism is not fair and that blame should not be placed on the scientists because they are under so much stress to put out a product whether it is new medicine or a more disease resistant plant, as fast as they possibly can. It is this emphasis on getting it out quickly is what leads to not knowing all of the effects of a medicine or a chicken gene being injected into a potato (Halper).

Where does this lead us in the future? Will we be a society that is stuck in a forever repeating pattern of: the food that we eat makes us sick, so we have to take more and more medicine to counter-act the sickness that we are getting from our food that we are causing for ourselves? It is my hope that this will not happen, but sometimes it seems like it is inevitable. My grandfather stating that the problem is not with the advancements in science and technology that the problem is in the amount of time that is

allotted to the scientist to come up with a solution to the problem. It is that problem that my take on what the future would like is based off of.

Scientists, now and in the future, should be given the proper amount of time to find out what the possible hazards could be by doing certain things to plants or if there are any drawbacks of certain medicines. I think that the advancements that have been made due to science and technology are positive and I think that these advancements should be continued, but with this continuation comes the responsibility of the manufactures to allow for more time for the end product. This way the science and technology community can still flourish, but not feel as if it is always under constant fire from critics.

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