

# [Response paper: facing famine, my daily dives in the dumpster, what’s in your too...](https://assignbuster.com/response-paper-facing-famine-my-daily-dives-in-the-dumpster-whats-in-your-toothpaste/)

Health and the Common Notions “ Good health” can be defined as the absence of illnesses and a state of mental and social well being. In other words, in order to maintain optimal health, it is imperative to have a well-balanced lifestyle, which would include a nutritious diet as well as mental and social tranquility. Tom Haines, author of “ Facing Famine”, David Bodanis, author of “ What’s in your Toothpaste”, and Lars Eighner, author of “ On Dumpster Diving”, discuss various topics of health while challenging the notions commonly perceived to be true. Together, the authors provide harsh insight regarding health conditions in relation to famine and disease in third world countries, as well as, challenging common views arguing on the truth behind toothpaste, and the perceptions held of everyday dumpster divers finding food from dumpsters and their “ unhealthy” lifestyles. Famine is a widespread shortage of food that may apply to any species, which is usually accompanied by regional malnutrition, starvation, epidemic, and increased mortality.

Author Tom Haines uses the short essay “ Facing Famine” to discuss the rising famine epidemic in high hopes of provide insight and a new perspective to his audience. Providing his personal experience of visiting a village in a third world country, Haines provides images and emotions to the reader illustrating the events that occurred. Immediately he recalls that on the first afternoon spent in the village he was promptly shown a shallow, wide hole with nothing but hard dry earth at the bottom. Due to the lack of precipitation from the drought the lush farming lands have withered away or died.

In turn eliminating all source of income, causing poverty. Once in poverty each household could no longer purchase essential supplies such as water, food, and medicine, ultimately leading to famine. Haines next introduces reasoning why the government of this third word country is not at blame either: “ Three times, the government tried to dig a well in this village” (Haines 3). The government had attempted three times to drill a hole in search for water however their attempts were unsuccessful or the drill bits would break.

Clearly, the government is in the same state of poverty as the rest of the country, crippling its ability to help its citizens any further (Haines 3). There after Haines presents a slightly more depressing perspective through a brief conversation with Gebi, the villager Haines is temporarily staying with. Gebi notes that, in his village, if all things remain the same and the drought does not stop, he will only have enough food to feed his family for five more months (Haines 4). The drought is the effect, which is causing an entire countrywide famine crisis.

This harsh reality as told by Haines is his way of informing his readers about the poor health conditions in third world countries. By providing examples on the poor standard of living and all the hardship these third world country natives are faced with, the author draws his readers closer, almost allowing them to feel the same pain and sorrow he is experiencing (Haines 4). Following the conversation at the end where one of the villagers expresses to Haines that his feeling of sorrow is in reality terror, Haines almost instantly empathizes when he says: “ Is it empathy?..

. Or am I crying from fear? ”. Despite the fact that neither Haines nor any of his readers actually put themselves in the position of these villagers, Haines seems to reason that his sorrowful tears are either from empathy or fear. Through the detailed examples, showing the problems third world citizens face, of his emotions, Haines allows his audience to connect to his feelings of sorrow and pain, while giving them insight on the famine epidemic. Assembling such extensive insight on famine strengthens his argument in which he, along with David Bodanis, provide challenging arguments on the common notions associated with good health. Toothpaste is one of the most common household items, inhabiting nearly every household while playing a vital role in our everyday routine.

David Bodanis, author of “ What’s in your Toothpaste”, researched the main ingredients of most brand name toothpastes and found several interesting components used to make what is considered toothpaste. Bodanis wastes no time ripping apart the toothpaste manufacturers by presenting to his readers that these toothpaste brands use plain, ordinary tap water. He states that nearly 30 to 45 percent of toothpaste is just simple H2O, which allows the manufacturers to end up making a ridiculous profit, which is understandable since water is so abundant and affordable (Bodanis 1). The next ingredient Bodanis reveals in toothpaste is chalk, second to water in quantity.

Chalk, made from the collected remains of crushed up ocean creators, is the only substance tough enough to grind into teeth during brushing. Although these chalk particles remove a decent about of plaque there is a particular amount of: “ unduly enlarged extra-abrasive chalk fragments tear such cavernous pits into the teeth that future decay bacteria will be able to bunker down there and thrive” (Bodanis 2). This is a shocking statistic since the main reason for toothpaste was to provide a suitable and efficient method for protecting teeth. Bodanis continues his argument when he states one appalling ingredient after another. He claims titanium dioxide, along with washing machine bleach, are included in this concoction in order to give the user an enhanced appearance of perfectly white teeth that is until these ingredients wear off (2). Seaweed, which holds the mass blob together, paraffin oil used to keep the smoothness of the substance, and glycerin glycol which is most commonly found in automobile antifreeze, are just a few of the other “ healthy” ingredients located inside that toothpaste mix (2).

In fact, Bodanis completely exploits the toothpaste industry and the common notions people associate with brushing their teeth. In addition to, Bodanis does not just present this illusion of a not so good health method by itself, he provides a factual and quite logical solution when he states: “ Studies show that thorough brushing with just plain water will often do as good a job” (Bodanis 2). To be put in simple terms and organize his argument; the use of toothpaste contains only a few positive attributes. Most of the ingredients are simply added to fool the consumer into thinking the toothpaste is cleaning their teeth, or in the case of the water, just used for appearance purposes. Bodanis argues against the common notion that toothpaste is a must have product for “ good health”; brushing with simple tap water will do just as good of a job and is a much more available resource to those unable to purchase toothpaste, such as one who considers himself a dumpster diver. “ On Dumpster Diving” written by Lars Eighner is about a homeless man, explaining the strategies and guidelines of surviving from dumpsters.

Eighner exemplifies the wasteful nature of Americans due to the endless amount of garbage they throw out that is still useful. He also explains the methods involved in the process of dumpster diving. The author began dumpster diving about a year before he became homeless. He used all of his infrequent income for rent, consequently having to derive all of life necessities from dumpsters.

Dumpster diving is commonly perceived to be an “ unhealthy lifestyle” by most people. However Eighner explains to the reader that there are perfectly useable items such as boom boxes, medicine and even change that are found from rummaging through dumpsters (Eighner 1). Even food, which is completely intact and edible, can found. People are brainwashed into thinking that once the food gets thrown out it is automatically inedible and full of disease.

These beliefs are argued and exploited by Eighner when he explains that there are three simple rules when scavenging for food through dumpsters. The three simples rules are using the sense of smell, and evaluating the condition of the food through basic knowledge, and answering the question “ Why was this discarded? ” (Eighner 2). He tells his audience that canned goods are of the most frequent type of food he finds, although he also commonly finds different foods with only a spot of mold, in which case he pares off the moldy area. His examples provide support to his argument, since average person would not eat from a garbage can or dumpster. They would think this method would be gross, immediately stereotyping anyone who eats from a dumpster as being unhealthy.

Fruits and vegetables are also commonly found intact inside of dumpsters, which Eighner explains: “ Many are discarded for minor imperfections that can be pared away” (Eighner 2). By simply cutting off the moldy or imperfect part of the food, there is no logic behind not eating it when it is still ready for devouring. No matter how edible the food is, as the author explains, there are still certain drawbacks of dumpster diving such as getting dysentery on a less than frequent basis (2). On the other hand, by comparing the positives and negatives of eating food from the dumpster, it is easy to outweigh the negatives.

After several years of diving into dumpsters looking for food and other essential belonging, Eighner talks about how he feels sorry for those people holding the negative notions on dumpster diving. The author expresses his frustration for those “ who have confounded their selves with the objects they grasp and who nightly scavenge the cable channels looking for they know not what” (Eighner 3). Those materialistic obsessed people are forever consumed on the idea of spending money on items not imperative for living. Eighner provides substantial evidence against the common notions held by people who look pessimistically upon scavengers diving through dumpsters looking’s for their food or other items needed to survive (3). Furthermore, as Eighner describes, by labeling dumpster divers as living an “ unhealthy lifestyle” it is an ignorant notion held by those who do not fully realize the methods and precautions taken by daily dumpster divers in their search for food and other items. Tom Haines, David Bodanis, and Lars Eighner provide ample and credible arguments on facing famine in a third world country, the truth of the ingredients of toothpaste and the perceptions of daily dumpsters divers, against the common notions held regarding a healthy lifestyle.