

A critique of 205 easy ways to save the earth



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A Critique of “ 205 Easy Ways to Save the Earth” by Thomas Friedman

Foreign affairs columnist for the New York Times, Thomas Friedman, is a man who wants to try to change the world by trying to convince people to go green. But, he is convinced that going green is not as easy as everyone makes it sound. His article “ 205 Easy Ways to Save the Earth,” first published in 2007, presents several arguments attempting to convince people that while going green is difficult, it is possible.

The author first discusses how we, as Americans, are not as green as we seem to be at first glance. He notes that we seem to only follow the “ easy way to go green” and do not do nearly as much as we could for our planet. Furthermore he states that there are no “ easy” ways to go green and that this word should never even be associated with the topic. Friedman points out that executives of large fuel companies are the only people who talk truthfully about the situation and that they take a guilty pleasure in knowing there is nothing we can really do about it.

From what the CEO of electric company Chevron, David O’Reilly says, it could take decades for any change to occur, and at that time there will be even more people than what we are trying to meet the energy demands for now. Robert Socolow and Stephen Pacala, two professors at Princeton, are attempting to design scalable solutions to fix these problems. These two developed a pie chart, in which if eight of fifteen parts were completed, we would be on the right track for reducing our carbon emissions.

Unfortunately, completing just one piece of the pie may be impossible with the way things seem to be going. Another individual, Nate Lewis a chemist at California Institute of Technology, claims that if we started trying to fix this

problem right now, we would have to make as much clean energy as the energy we are currently consuming. With all of this being said even taking the first step towards a green revolution seems nearly impossible. Friedman starts his argument on this subject in a rather sarcastic way.

He states “ Who knew saving the Earth could be so easy-and in just under a minute” (290). While this does convey his opinion well, there are better ways of getting your point across. Overall though, the effectiveness of his entire argument is pretty well put together. He uses the phrase “ green revolution” to describe this situation, and in using this term, he raises a good point. He goes on to say “ A green revolution? Have you ever seen a revolution where no one got hurt? ” (291). This is a very good way to put what he is trying to get across and what he is saying here is very true.

To put it in simpler terms, he is saying that sacrifices will have to be made in order for any changes to take effect. Friedman also does a great job of laying out and breaking down what a systemic green strategy would look like into three easy parts that make things seem so simple. The author gets this information not from what the books he read say but rather what he says is “ left unsaid by these books” (293) Friedman then starts citing other author’s works to help his own ideas seem more plausible and convincing; beginning with Maniates.

Friedman uses this author’s work to help support his own by showing that he agrees with Friedman’s idea that there are no easy ways to go green and as soon as we realize this, the better (293). Friedman then goes on to compare how he explained the scale of the problem, in terms of weighing yourself (293), to Socolow and Pacala’s scale. The way that those two illustrate the

scale of the problem definitely helps Friedman get his point across. He finishes by comparing his options to hard facts, Lewis' calculations.

Friedman says " his approach is useful in conveying the challenge" (297). It is indeed helpful, but it can at some points be confusing when he goes deep into the calculations and statistics. Friedman has a natural writing style and he conveys what he is trying to say to the reader in a great way. His ideas about going green are inventive and, for the most part, are easy to comprehend. He is correct in what he says and his opinions are very agreeable. Going green is not easy and Friedman makes this very clear.

Even though he does come straight out and say this, he backs himself up by providing multiple solutions to the situation. After considering what the author has to say, and looking at all the input that he provides on the situation, we can definitely agree with Thomas Friedman that going green is difficult but possible. Works Cited Friedman, Thomas L. " 205 Easy Ways to Save the Earth. " Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum. Ed. Laurence Behrens and Leonard J. Rosen. 11th ed. New York: Longman, 2010. 289-99. Print.