

Example of reefer madness, by eric schlosser argumentative essay

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An Excellent Textbook Choice

If we look back through banned books in history, titles like *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *The Catcher in the Rye*, it seems almost inconceivable that a book specifically about sex, drugs, and illegal immigrants would be considered as a textbook for school. However, the world is a changing place, and it is exactly because of the content that such a book would be so valuable in a college 1A English Composition course. In fact, *Reefer Madness*, by Eric Schlosser, would be a valuable textbook in a composition course for a variety of reasons including the content material and the scholarly approach in which Schlosser tackles and argues traditionally taboo topics.

The world is a changing place. The values once celebrated have been shaped and adapted into new values for the current times. That being the case, if education is to continue to have an impact on the youth, there should be changes made that students can connect with and feel strongly towards. Fortunately or unfortunately, the topics that seem to interest the youth these days are drugs and sex. We see these topics in most of the mainstream media—movies, video games, television shows, and it is widely sensationalized on the news. For this reason chapter 1 and chapter 3 are excellent choices for a textbook in an English 1A college composition course. Chapter 1, entitled “*Reefer Madness*,” tackles the topic of marijuana and the benefits of legalization or at least decriminalization. Chapter 3, entitled “*An Empire of the Obscene*,” tackles the topic of pornography and the huge industry that abounds, largely on the black market. Both topics will have tremendous appeal to the traditional college-age student, and for this reason, the textbook would be a powerful teaching device. Apathy seems to

be a major problem in education, and if students identify and even feel passionately about the content material, it provides a positive learning environment and lends to great discussions with students. The textbook could potentially shift the attitude of college students towards education in general.

Schlosser's thesis for Chapter 1 is that marijuana should be decriminalized. Although he doesn't follow the typical college composition organizational method of perhaps a five paragraph essay that presents a thesis statement in the introduction, he does fulfill all the criteria for a strong piece of nonfiction work. He doesn't establish his thesis early on. Instead, he paints a picture of the issue, weighing the pros and cons of the issue surrounding marijuana, and then follows up his argument saying decriminalization would be an incredibly valuable decision. Chapter 3 presents the thesis that pornography would not be so widely spread in culture if it weren't a natural part of our human make-up. This is a much different argument than the first and tackles the issue in more of a philosophical and anthropological way, rather than an economic and political way. Yet, he maintains the same level of scholarly writing, building arguments with logical premises and conclusions and in-depth research, two prominent skills that should be taken away from a 1A Composition course: argumentative writing and scholarly research. Plus Schlosser is an expert at weaving the two together which allows for numerous examples and teaching opportunities for students. The afterword, entitled " More Madness" brings the issue of drugs to the students' doorstep in a way, and in this way, Schlosser brings what might

seem outside of the students' reality (but probably not) into their world as he examines a school principal and his attempts to control the situation of marijuana at school. All together, these three sections can be studied individually or in combination with one another in a way that would create an engaging and educational experience for students.

Who would have ever thought that a book about sex and drugs would be a positive thing for students? But the fact of the matter is that the world is a changing place, and the education system has to change with it. A book like *Reefer Madness* would be a perfect place to start because even though it does concentrate on classically taboo topics, the way Schlosser approaches the topics in an academic and scholarly way provides teachers and students with great educational material. The end result would benefit both teachers and students in the long run.

Work Cited

Schlosser, Eric. *Reefer Madness*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2004. Print.