

ASSIGNMENT FOR
PERSUASIVE ESSAY DRAWING ON LIBRARY RESEARCH

Academic Writing II

Write a five to six page research paper (approximately 1,000 to 1,200 words) concerning a current issue which is important to you. Refer to at least five or six sources which may include journals, newspapers, books, speeches, films, tapes, documentaries, and interviews with experts in the field. The paper must be neatly typed, and all drafts must be dated and handed in with the final revision.

The choice of topic is an essential part of the research process as you need to obtain the required number of sources. Most topics need to be limited in order to focus on the main points of the issue. As you conduct the research, you'll need to evaluate sources to include the best possible authoritative information from which to synthesize the facts. In writing the paper, you must establish and support a position in addition to providing the opposing points of view.

Of course writing paraphrases and selecting quotes for the paper are an integral part of the research process. Activities which involve thinking skills such as categorizing comparing/contrasting, evaluating, questioning, and other skills will be emphasized as part of the procedure. Part of your JAWS or journal about writing should encompass experiences involved in the process of thinking, learning, and writing.

The following assignments must be completed before the paper is submitted.

Write a JAWS entry as you work on your paper. The entries will provide a reference for you as well as a record of weekly activities. These JAWS will be collected when the paper is due.

Topic chosen--2/23/93

Sources listed--2/25/93 (bibliographic format is not necessary, but include ALL information.

Write from one to four major questions about the topic.

Write general questions about your topic (from seven to ten) which you'll consider in your paper.

Write a working thesis statement based on the major question.

Take notes on the information. Even though notes don't have to be handed in with the paper, they must be available in case I have questions about authenticity of paraphrases and quotes.

Write a preliminary outline.

Write a thesis statement and a final outline.

Write a list of lead sentences as well as the thesis statement and matching statement(s) in the closing.

List all sources in alphabetical order on cards or on separate pieces of paper.

Complete draft #1--two copies of the paper March 18

Complete draft #2--two copies due April 6

Complete draft #3--Due April 13--ALL dated and numbered drafts must be submitted with the paper plus the JAWS written during this period of time. Conferences should be helpful to you, and I will be available during the regular times as well as all day on March 24 and again on March 30. Classes will not be in session on March 25 or on March 30.

Rachel Adleman

Problems with Packaging

The filling of our nation's landfills is not a new topic for most people. The term, "recycle" has become a household name. However, a major factor involved in the garbage situation has been overlooked. People have ignored the root of the problem. At least one third of the garbage in municipal dumps comes from the packaging of normal, everyday products that society uses (Holusha D2). Packaging is excessive and unnecessary; therefore, the packaging industry should be nationally regulated, in both the amount of packaging it uses for its products and in its stress on recycling.

Packaging was not a big business until advertising expanded. Since its expansion, advertising has had an important role in society. The need for convenience and longer shelf lives was increasing and industries began to rely on packaging as a form of advertising (15). New packaging materials led to cheaper packaging costs and more convenience for the consumer (15). According to Louis Blumberg and Robert Gottlieb, co-authors of the book War on Waste, "The evolving patterns of production and consumption had set the stage for the contemporary solid waste dilemma" (15).

Those opposed to the regulation of packaging believe that there are several reasons why packaging should not be regulated. According to Blumberg and Gottlieb, packages serve as a "marketing tool, enhancing the sales value of a particular product and helping differentiate it from other similar items" (262). Thus, packaging serves an important role in the marketing business. Academic researchers from the Environmental Protection agency "note that reducing convenience could create enormous consumer outcry" ("Facing" 113). Other reasons include the many recycling programs that have been introduced across the country. Many people believe that packaging wastes can be recycled or decomposed, de-emphasizing the importance of the amount of packaging a product contains. In addition to convenience, people believe that packaging serves several other uses, such as protection from tampering and an increased shelf life. According to John Holusha, author of several articles appearing in The New York Times concerning packaging, with all of the functions of packaging, regulating a set of standards would be difficult (D2).

However, the facts are difficult to ignore. Every year, Americans throw away approximately 120 tons of waste, one third of which is packaging (Blumberg xvi). Of our nation's raw supplies, packaging uses 50 percent of all paper and paperboard, 90 percent of aluminum foil, 96 percent of all non-flat glass and 20 percent of all plastic products (Mason 359). All of this material is used for packages that we may only use for a short period of time. For example, Americans go through 2.5 million plastic beverage bottles per hour and throw away 2.5 billion

styrofoam cups a year (Marinelli 28). All of this garbage eventually reaches the landfills, where it goes to waste.

Contrary to the argument that packaging plays an important role in the sales market, many consumers are concerned about the environment and the effects of the products they buy. A survey conducted by a Roper Organization concluded that "29 percent of all consumers said they bought one product over another because of an advertisement or label claiming environmental benefits" (Holusha D10). Andrew Giangola, spokesman for Pepsico says, "Consumers want environmentally correct packages" (D10). It is obvious that many consumers care about the environment more than their own convenience, and would, therefore, support anti-packaging legislation.

Recycling seems like an easy solution to this dilemma. However, even with new elaborate recycling systems, recycling has not helped solve the problem. Approximately 1 percent of the plastics used in packaging are actually recycled (Hunter 8). Since packaging uses approximately 20 percent of the plastic that is produced and 30 percent to 50 percent of all garbage comes from plastic (Holmes 32), it is obvious that a minimal amount of plastic is actually recycled. Despite the new glass and aluminum recycling programs, such as the five-cent bottle return programs that exist in several states, large quantities of recyclable materials are thrown away. According to the Environmental Defense Fund, the United States throws away "enough glass to fill the twin towers of New York City's World Trade Center every two weeks, enough aluminum to rebuild our entire commercial air fleet every three months, and enough office and writing paper to build a 12-foot Great Wall coast to coast every year" (Elkington 32).

Emphasizing recycling programs is difficult when many manufacturing companies mislead consumers to believe that their products are recyclable or are made of recyclable materials. For example, although cleaning product companies, such as All and Wish claim that they

now use technology that can include recycled plastic in [their] bottles at levels between 15% and 30%, [however], no where does it say whether any recycled plastic is actually in the bottle. Indeed, company officials say the bottles may or may not contain recycled plastic. (Holusha D1)

The success of recycling programs depends on the cooperation of major manufacturing companies.

Although it is true that some excessive packaging is needed to provide consumer and product safety, there is some packaging that is unnecessary and is produced only for convenience. Pill bottles are a good example. Most pill bottles are sold in cardboard boxes that serve no purpose and are usually thrown away once the product is opened. In addition to this unnecessary

packaging, there has also been an increase in the production and sales of single-use packages. For example, the drink boxes that many children take to school add to the garbage dilemma. The boxes are used once and then thrown away.

Many consumers think that government regulation is a solution to the overpackaging problem. A Roper survey states, "consumers surveyed said strict governmental enforcement of stiffer regulations was the best solution to solving [the pollution and waste disposal problems]" (Holusha D10). With the consumer's support, the regulation of the packaging industry is easier to enforce. Many consumers would back up David Olsen, director of Rochester Institute of Technology's Packaging Science Department, who believes that in order to clean up our environment, there will have to be surcharges on packages that do not meet governmental standards (D1). He believes that these surcharges would result in a trend toward more environmentally friendly packaging (D1). Olsen's proposal would be a logical solution to the overpackaging problem.

Over the past decade, legislation concerning this topic has been introduced in many states and counties. In Maine, juice containers made of a mixture of metal, plastic and paper have been outlawed because of their difficulty to recycle (Holusha D10). Suffolk County, New York, as another example, proposed a ban in 1988 on many plastic food containers (Sack B1). Supporters of these laws as well as other legislation believe that this new legislation will encourage other governments to pass similar laws (B1). According to Holusha, "Suffolk County's law was the first of its kind in the nation, but in the interim, more than thirty other local governments, from Newark to Portland, Oregon, have outlawed some forms of packaging" (B1).

As Blumberg and Gottlieb say in their book, "Waste reduction at the source . . . has to be considered the most direct form of prevention, avoiding, or reducing the generation of wastes" (260). The only way waste can be reduced at the source is through a combination of enforced standards of packaging and cooperative recycling by the part of both the consumers and the manufacturers.

Works Cited

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