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English 101

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September 22, 2011

Fast-Food and Obesity: Who's to Blame?

David Zinczenko's essay, "Don't Blame the Eater," emphasizes the relationship between obese children and fast-food restaurants. As a child, Zinczenko had limited food choices, both in and out of home. By eating, twice a day, at fast-food vendors, Zinczenko became obese (195). He asserts that by becoming involved in the health and fitness industry, he was able to turn his life around. Zinczenko observes that fast-food restaurants are located almost everywhere, appeal to children, are inexpensive, and are easy to access. Therefore, he believes that the declining nutritional value of easy-access food is aiding the growing trend of childhood obesity. Zinczenko asserts that fast-food companies provide vague information concerning the calorie contents of their food. According to him, "There are no calorie information charts on fast-food packaging, the way there are on grocery items. Advertisements don't carry warning labels the way tobacco ads do" (Zinczenko 196). Zinczenko insists that fast-food companies are "vulnerable," and he urges the industry to protect its consumers (197). Zinczenko is right about the need of nutritional information for fast-food; however, common sense dictates that people should know not to eat at fast-food restaurants every day.

When deciding what to eat for dinner, the nutritional value of food can be an important aspect of the decision. However, unlike gro-

This is an effective opening sentence because it immediately introduces the author and title of the text that is being analyzed.

The introductory paragraph is also effective because it provides a brief synopsis of the article's argument, which prepares the reader for a more in-depth analysis in the body paragraphs.

This is an effective thesis statement because it agrees with one aspect of Zinczenko's essay while disagreeing with another. The author's claim is clearly stated.

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cery items and tobacco products, fast-food items do not require nutrition labels. Zinzchenko asserts to his audience that the nutritional information, provided by the fast-food companies, can be tricky to understand:

One company's Web site lists its chicken salad as containing 150 calories; the almonds and noodles that come with (an additional 190 calories) are listed separately. Add a serving of the 280-calorie dressing, and you've got a healthy lunch alternative that comes in at 620 calories. But that's not all. Read the small print on the back of the dressing packet and you'll realize it actually contains 2.5 servings. If you pour what you've been served, you're suddenly up around 1,040 calories...and that doesn't take into account that 450-calorie super-size Coke. (196-197)

Zinzchenko's argument has ground; this healthy-alternative to a fast-food cheeseburger actually contains approximately half the daily recommended amount of calories. However, it is important to note that this essay was written in 2002; today, many fast-food restaurants have a variety of salads, and they serve fruit, juices, and milk on their children's meals.

Nonetheless, I wholeheartedly endorse what Zinzchenko is calling for: fast-food restaurants need to display the nutritional values of their food (197). It can be easy to one to not truly consider the contents of what he is about to consume. Like the warnings on tobacco and alcoholic items, fast-food nutritional information can be there to warn consumers about what they are about to do to their bodies.

While the vague nutritional values of fast-food items are a

Here, the author addresses a weakness in Zinzchenko's essay by observing the time difference between now and when his essay was written.

Note that the transitions in this paragraph are strong as well; the author uses phrases like "however" and "nonetheless" to guide the reader.

Here is another effective transitional word to move from one paragraph to the next.

problem on the behalf of the companies, what someone eats is his responsibility. In his essay, Zinczenko asserts that people who grew up with fast-food are destined for a lifetime of obesity: “But most of the teenagers who live, as I once did, on a fast-food diet won’t turn their lives around: They’ve crossed under the golden arches to a likely fate of lifetime obesity” (195-196). However, if Zinczenko was able to turn his life around, why can’t others do the same? People do have the willpower to make good choices and turn their lives around. Zinczenko also claims that many obese children have no other to choice but to eat at fast-food vendors, because of the restaurants’ accessibility and low prices. This reasoning is faulty, and it is not true: there are other ways to have an inexpensive, healthy meal. For instance, a child can eat a turkey sandwich at home. Their parents could pre-make a meal, on their days off, and freeze it for their children to microwave. They could also use a crockpot, for preparing meals, by filling it and turning it on before they go to work; that way, dinner will be ready when their children get home from school. Taking the steps to be healthy may take extra time and effort, but it’s worth it compared to the price of being obese or having diabetes. There are choices for everything in life; one can choose to take care of himself or one can simply decide to do nothing for his health. Not taking personal responsibility for what one eats is also a choice.

Zinczenko’s essay makes a strong point; there is a need for nutritional information about fast-food items. Having access to the information about the contents and nutritional values of fast-food items may help one make an informed decision about his food options. However, people

The author varies her word choices; instead of using “says” all the time, she uses words like “emphasizes” and “asserts,” which strengthen the essay.

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need to take responsibility for the choices that they make. Eating fast-food is not a forced decision. With the nutritional information and will power at hand, people can turn their lives around. When someone walks into a fast-food restaurant, he is not trapped in there forever; all it takes is for him to put down the burger and walk out.

The conclusion clearly restates the author's claim and ends on this final scenario, one that is relatable to most—if not all—readers.

Works Cited

Zinczenko, David. "Don't Blame the Eater." *They Say / I Say*. 2nd ed. Eds. Gerald Graff, and Cathy Birkenstein. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009. 195-197. Print.