

## Grade 12, Module 5: Good Food/Bad Food Writing Assignment – Student Essays

### Reading Selections for This Module

Bittman, Mark. “Bad Food? Tax It, and Subsidize Vegetables.” *New York Times* 23 July 2011, late ed.: Sunday Review 1. Print.

Brody, Jane E. “Attacking the Obesity Epidemic by First Figuring Out Its Cause.” *New York Times* 12 Sept. 2011: D7(L). Print.

Waters, Alice and Katrina Heron. “No Lunch Left Behind.” *New York Times* 19 Feb. 2009: A31. Print.

### Web Sites for This Module

Dr. Robert C. and Veronica Atkins Center for Weight and Health UC Berkeley  
<http://cwh.berkeley.edu/resources/2/20/53/16%2C38%2C96>

Food Inc.  
<http://www.takepart.com/foodinc/>

Michael Pollan  
<http://michaelpollan.com/>

The Edible Schoolyard  
<http://edibleschoolyard.org/>

Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity  
<http://www.yaleruddcenter.org/>

### Writing Assignment

Desperate times call for desperate measures, but what measures are realistic and will really work to solve the problem of the obesity epidemic? You have learned about and discussed different causes of the obesity epidemic, including the unhealthy food available to students in schools and young peoples’ unhealthy eating habits. For this project, you will write a proposal for how to encourage healthier eating at your school. Your proposal should address a problem that you have identified and be addressed to an audience that might help you solve the problem. Possible audiences are student government, your principal, parents of students, or the superintendent of your school district. You may want to propose changes to the food that is available to students or ways of educating them to be consumers of healthier food. You should provide a justification for the solution you propose based on your research and include at least four sources including examples and/or quotations from the articles you have read; information from videos or websites that your teacher has suggested; and data from the survey that you designed and administered.

Brainstorm possible ideas for encouraging healthy eating at your school, and select the one that you feel would have the biggest impact while being practical to implement.

## **Task Considerations**

The writing assignment for Good Food/Bad Food asks students to write a proposal for how to encourage healthy eating at the writer's school. Students are to identify their potential audience and use evidence from the assigned articles as well as their own internet research and the survey they administered to fellow students. They are asked to consider not only the impact their proposed solution might have but also its practicality.

No teacher questionnaires accompanied these essays. "America's XXL Issue" came from a one school while the remaining essays came from two different classes at a different school. They all appear to be final drafts written out of class. Two teachers required a Works Cited list while the third teacher apparently did not. Students generally responded well to the task of writing a proposal and made an effort to write for a specific audience. Most writers used both their internet research and data from their class survey as sources, although with varying degrees of effectiveness.

## **How the Sample Papers Were Scored**

Six student papers without scores are presented below in scrambled order. Scores and commentary explaining the rationale for the scores are presented in a separate document. The papers have been scored using the 6-point rubric designed for the essay portion of the CSU English Placement Test (EPT). For more information about the test and for additional sample essays, see "Focus on English": <http://calstate.edu/sas/documents/focusonenglish.pdf>.

Four highly experienced readers who have graded EPT essays for decades scored the essays. While some degree of subjectivity is always involved in scoring, the process of calibration and the resolution of differences among the scorers mean the scores below are likely to approximate the scores that would be given by official EPT scorers. The holistic scoring of essays does not allow taking into consideration particular students and their challenges; the purpose is to provide an objective measure of students' readiness to enroll in a first-year college composition course. On the EPT, essay scores are combined with scores from two multiple-choice sections, Reading and Composing Skills. Students who earn a total score of 147 or above are considered fully ready to enroll in first year college composition courses. Students who earn 146 or below may need additional developmental work.

Because the EPT Criteria were designed to score essays written for a 45 minute exam, the scorers had to adapt them in order to score essays that were written, or more commonly revised, outside of class. Because students had access to one or more texts in addition to the prompt, the category "understanding and use of the passage," readers interpreted "understanding and use of the readings" to mean "understanding and use of texts" and to include the referencing of sources.

All names and other identifying information have been changed to maintain the confidentiality of students, their teachers, and schools. Each paper is identified by its title. If the paper had no title, the first line or so of the paper is used as the title.

**Dear Ms. Fong, ... I am writing to you because...**

Dear Ms. Fong,

I am writing to you because I believe that it is a school's responsibility to educate its students in order to give them a chance at a better future. It is important for schools to ensure that its students are healthy and develop good eating habits which will ultimately help them later on in life along with traditional educational fields such as mathematics. For this reason I wish to get approval for my proposal to educate students at Fremont High School about proper nutrition and eating habits.

According to the article "No Lunch Left Behind" by Alice Waters, "eating well requires education.(Waters et.al.)" This could never be more true for the students at Fremont High School. A vast majority of the school chooses to eat lunch at fast food restaurants off of campus. This is clearly evident from the mass exodus of students from the schools campus. The students come back to campus with their hands full of junk food such as French fries, pizza, and other unhealthy convenience store fare. If students were aware of the dangers of consuming such an unhealthy diet, they would refrain from eating malnutritious foods. According to a survey of students conducted in January of 2013, roughly 85% of the student population does not examine the nutrition facts labels of foods they are about to consume. Educating students on simple aspects of healthful living such as inspection of food labels can and should be done at this school.

The implementation of nutrition education in Fremont High School is as simple as adding a mandatory unit in all physical education classes. This unit can teach students how to cultivate healthy eating habits in conjunction with their fitness class. The instructors can use online curriculum, such as the widely successful health education curriculum Learn to be Healthy in select Maryland schools. The school could also foster students' love for healthy food by selling healthy foods such as Jamba Juice or Odwalla Bars at lunch every week. Even small encouragements for healthy eating, such as the sale of tasty and nutritious foods, can make a big difference in teaching future graduates how to eat well.

This approach to nutrition education is sure to work, as it has been successful in schools around the country, in areas such as Berkeley, California, and Houston, Texas. Parents of Houston students are even reporting that their kids are now cooking at home, turning away from foods they have learned are unhealthy, and [that] they display a solid awareness of what healthy eating is all about." If a program aimed at giving students nutrition education was implemented at our school, students would be able to make smarter choices pertaining to their health and wellness. Giving students the potential to succeed is something that can be accomplished through nutrition education is it is carried out successfully by the administration.

Sincerely,  
Kathy Patel

## **A Change Is Needed**

Students, class mates, friends, are you tired of receiving those unhealthy, bad, quality, tasteless foods at school? Well so am I. It is time we speak up and let our staff know, including our principal Mr. Edison, that our school needs better lunches. A couple of class mates and I asked 86 Fremont students if they believed our school lunches were healthy, about 71% answered No. There seems to be a problem there don't you think?

Mr. Edison, We, the students at California Valley High are not asking for expensive meals at our school, we are simply asking for better quality and handmade food. The food that we get served at school is either re-heated or packaged, which is why half, if not more of the students go across the street and just buy lunch from the variety of restaurants we have available. That would not be necessary if our school provided good and tasty lunches for us.

Having healthy quality food would benefit the school and the students. Eating healthier provides a healthier brain, which would help students get better grades in school, bringing California Valley High's statistics up. The students would benefit as well because we wouldn't be spending so much money. We spend about five to ten dollars daily on lunches outside of campus because we do not want to eat the food that is served to us at the cafeteria. Not only are we wasting our money on unhealthy foods but we are also destroying our health.

I also believe that students should be introduced to The Edible Schoolyard Academy. According to their website, "The Edible Schoolyard Academy is designed to support emerging and established school garden and kitchen programs world-wide." The more students get involved, the better. Our students will learn how important it is to consume healthy foods instead of that cheap junk food that is sold to us. Not only would students be learning and helping out the community by joining the Edible Schoolyard Academy, it would also put a nice label on Fremont if a lot of students join this project. The more informed students are the less junk they'll consume.

I know that making this change would take time and more money but once our school starts to provide better quality lunches, students would not mind paying two or 3 dollars daily for it. We could get rid of reduced lunches and just have students pay for their lunch, that would help California Valley High pay for the lunches being provided. The cost would be a bit more than it is now, but the benefits would really show with time. My plan is really simple and straight forward, make school lunches healthier and the school will get healthier kids with healthier minds.

In "No Lunch Left Behind" by Alice Waters and Katrina Heron, they say that from the money that is given to schools, very little goes towards school lunches. Well that is a mistake I believe our school is making. I know the idea of spending more money doesn't sound so pleasant but with time it will pay off. Having our school provide us with healthy, nutritious, and tasty lunches would help us maintain a healthy weight, of course with a little exercise. It would help

us feel good throughout the day because we would have the right amount of energy levels, and lastly but not least, it would keep our minds alerted, helping us perform better in school.

Like I said, the plan is simple and straightforward. Provide us with the right healthy foods and the education we need to learn about staying healthy, and we will do as asked to perform better in school, get better grades and make sure we give California Valley High a good label.

#### Works Cited

*“ESY Academy.” The Edible Schoolyard Project. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Feb. 2013.*

*Waters, Alice, and Katrina Heron. “No Lunch Left behind.” (2009): 1-2. The New York Times. 19 Feb. 2009. Web. 3 Feb. 2013.*

*Maybe, Debby. “Benefits From Eating Healthy.” LIVESTRONG.COM. N.p., 13 May 2011. Web. 04 Feb. 2013.*

## Stay Healthy And Keep Obesity Away

Let's be honest habits, are just that. A habit is a recurrent problem of behavior that is acquired through repetition and is often done without thinking. If there is no thought to someone's eating habits, it is hard to know when a bad one has been formed. In a study of 86 Fremont High school students 47 of them wanted to know more about staying healthy and exercising. That's 54.65%. This is where I fit in, My fellow California Valley High school students I write to you to address the NOT so oversized problem of obesity at our school. I recognize there is not a large majority of people that can be considered obese but everyone can and should be a healthy weight for their body's height. I purpose the students take their health into their own hands by balancing any unhealthy foods with at least one full whole meal(meats, dairy, green vegetables, and any type of grain) a day, and exercise 3 hours per week.

Now I know what you could be thinking, and no I'm not crazy. I know everyone has a life, places to go, people to see but your health is the most important thing in your life. In Jane E. Brody's article *Attacking the Obesity Epidemic by First Figuring Out its Cause* argues that fast food, compared to past decades, is more readily available than ever before thus the cause of obesity. I agree with this quote from the article "the industry made it easier for people to consume more calories throughout the day" because if a person turns on a their tv during commercials or go for a walk near fast food restaurants and they will be bombarded by advertisements. This in turn causes more people to buy the fast cheap food that they see over and over repeatedly. California High school students should not be targeted by advertisements, yet they are, as a fellow teen with a big appetite I say get full of healthy foods.

Maybe you are wondering what is the best type of foods to be eat because you just not sure. This article by Pollan, Michael. "Michael Pollan Answers Readers'™ Questions." *Michael Pollan Answers Readers'™ Questions*. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 Feb. 2013. has some great questions and answers for its readers an example is "What is the single best food we all should be eating every day? Cutting to the nitty-gritty, here." His reply was "whole grains". This was important to me because it was straightforward and simple. As a school for growing young adults it shouldn't take much to eat whole grains on a regular daily basis.

To be fair to both sides I can see that some people might say it is a financial inconvenience to go out and buy whole grain products but I have two great reasons why its worth the little pocket change and where there is always somewhere you can get them without too much charge. For starters if the total amount of how much money you can save on medical bills by eating at least one well balanced meal a day and exercising 3 hours per week you could probably but that towards paying that towards a college university tuition. Lets not forget that all students are welcome to a school lunch for a fair price compared to other fast food brands off campus. Not just fair priced but school lunch is also healthy with generous portions and for those who qualify, subsidized lunches.

In the end the choice lies with you, the reader. I have given you my reason some background information for healthy eating, some causes of obesity, a great place to get questions answered and where good food that is also good for you is quickly accessible to you. I hope you consider my proposal to eat at least one balanced meal a day and exercise at least 3 hour per week.

**Dear California Valley High School District, ... we all are aware of the problem...**

Dear California Valley High School District,

we all are aware of the problem that many Americans are facing today, obesity which causes diabetes. Many Americans are overweight and something has to be done to start a change in our eating habits. A way to start is in schools. Food in schools also has an effect on how students eat. Here at California Valley high school many students do not eat healthy in fact they prefer to eat off-campus, because they don't like the lunch provided in here. In a survey 19 out of 25 students said they don't like the school lunch and 17 prefer to eat off-campus which is where all the unhealthy food is. To encourage students to eat the lunch here the food needs to improve. There are many ways to do this like changing the food and not giving the same thing over and over again. Having fresh food and not frozen, that just get heated in the ovens. Also not to have pizza and burgers everyday. In the article "No Lunch Left Behind" it states that many nutrition experts believe that "it is possible to fix the National School Lunch Program by throwing a little more money at it." Also not just the lunch should be change but also the school should make an effort by providing nutrition classes that will teach students on how to stay healthy. And make P.E. classes to be required at least for three years, so that way students will exercise more. There are many things that the school could do to start making changes and have healthier students and a healthier society.

Another way is that since bad food is off-campus what California Valley should do is have a close campus or make it some days open and others closed. That way students will not be exposed to all that food that is not healthy for anyone. Also the school should find a company that delivers fresh food. In the same article No Lunch Left Behind it says that the Agriculture Department will have to do its part by providing fresh fruits and vegetables from farms to school. This shows that working together can make things change and help everyone to have a good health and less obesity.

## **Obesity: America's XXL Issue**

As Type 2 Diabetes, high blood pressure, increased levels in cholesterol, liver disease, joint problems, and cardiovascular disease run rampant in our nation's adults, a growing number of children and adolescents are being diagnosed with these ailments every day as a result of the now "childhood" obesity epidemic. In just three decades, the incidence of obesity has tripled, as much as 17%. About 12.5 million of children aged 2-19 years are obese. (CDC 4). Along with the increasing number of medical cases comes with it more hospital visits, and of course, increasing medical costs. Although many factors have contributed to this epidemic, a crucial change we can make is reforming the National School Lunch Program, right here in our own school.

Without any initiative to change, the medical cost of obesity is projected to reach \$344 Billion by the year 2018. (Bittman 4). Since its inception in 1946, the National School Lunch Program has evolved into a provider of many high-fat, low grade foods being served to children on a daily basis. We all can point fingers at each other when it comes to our nations overgrown children, but ultimately, we all must take personal responsibility and action to provide wholesome, organic, and healthy meals to our nation's schoolchildren. In order to see an improvement in children's health, parents, students, and educators at California Valley High School must work together to work with local farmers to get fresh produce directly to the school and in the hands of children at lunchtime. Although there are specks of healthy offerings on the menu, we all must take action to do more about this issue.

Moving towards an organic and freshly prepared lunch program has been tried elsewhere... with much success. Some parent advocacy groups have formed, such as the Better School Food that has abandoned the National School Lunch program and has moved towards obtaining fresh produce from local farmers. An exemplary school movement of this kind has occurred in Berkeley at Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School. 16 years ago, the Edible Schoolyard Project (ESY) was started by Alice Waters with the building of a garden on a 1 acre piece of land on the school site. Waters was able to successfully start a school garden and teaching kitchen. The garden also enriched curriculum and was even able to tie some lessons in together with math and science. Most importantly, though, is the hands-on experience of students being able to eat what they've grown with their own hands, teaching healthier eating habits at school as well as at home.

I propose that we follow in the footsteps of Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School through much of the same approaches to our school lunches. Organically grown, all-natural ingredients on site and ready to use ingredients for freshly prepared lunches. In a survey conducted by my English class, 56% of the students said they eat junk food after school rather than eat school lunches. However, when asked if they would eat a freshly prepared lunch over a package lunch, 80% of the students said "Yes." To get a clearer idea of the kind of food currently served at school, Mrs. Moore, our teacher in ELA Block 2, requested a copy of the current school lunch menu. Mrs. Moore was met with some initial hesitance to surrender a copy of the menu, for a good reason. The current menu is tainted with various unhealthy lunch offerings



such as pizza, burgers, burritos, nachos, hot wings, tater tots, and the list goes on. The demand for healthier food exists; now it's up to schools to offer it.

We must take the initiative to demand more from the government to truly take care of children's health by increasing funding to schools for organic farming both on school campus and outsourcing from local farms. Building an organic school garden would benefit the students here at California Valley, both in and outside the classroom. According to Alice Waters and Katie Heron, Congress has the power to make fresh fruit and vegetables more readily available to schoolchildren through reauthorizing the Child Nutrition and Women Infants and Children Act. The only possible opposition to this method of improving the health of our children is the financial burden that it carries along with it.

Opposition to my all-natural, organic food sourcing strategy would criticize it for its monetary toll it would take. My proposal however, would actually benefit the health of the schoolchildren and pay back in savings from unnecessary medical costs before eating healthier school lunches. Although the cost to feed the nation's schoolchildren would amount to about \$27 billion annually, the benefits in health improvement in the long run would be well worth the effort.

Obesity is here to stay unless we are willing to do something about it. It is critical that we take action immediately. With your letters to our representatives in Washington, D.C, we will be able to create a system where every child, both at California Valley High School and every other school, is taught about healthy eating and provided with a fresh, healthy school lunch.

#### Works Cited

Bittman, Mark. "Bad Food? Tax It and Subsidize Vegetables." *The New York Times* 23 Jul. 2011. Print.

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"Our History." Edible Schoolyard Project, np. Nd. Web. 31 Jan. 2013.

Waters, Alice and Katrine Heron. "No Lunch Left Behind." *The New York Times* 19 Feb. 2009. Print.

## **Dear Students and staff, ... How often do you eat at the school's cafeteria?**

Dear Students and staff,

How often do you eat at the school's cafeteria? Are the students really enjoying what they eat? Due to this concern I have researched and found that not only California Valley is being affected by this. Further research shows that teens from Kansas to Wisconsin protested because kids were being left hungry and being malnourished. Now we don't want students having these types of problems at California Valley this is why we must take action and resolve this problem.

Although, Students are allowed to go eat around the schools restaurants and fast food, California Valley would rather have students eating a healthy diet nutritional meal instead of unhealthy fast food. As a student there is nothing better than buying cheap fast food, however there is a downside to cheap fast food. Not only is the food unhealthy but packs a load of calories. On an article over fast food it talks how a double quarter pounder with coke can have about 1800 calories while a person's diet should consist on a 2,000 calorie diet. This can lead to obesity and other health problems which California Valley should be concerned.

In a New York Times article by Alice Waters and Katrina Heron it talks about how money goes into school lunches for students but seems to be a bad investment, states the article. The United States Department of Agriculture offers a lunch program which offers kids lunch for \$2.57 or 2.17 for reduced income. The cost is around 9 million according to USDA in 2007. However if all the kids don't eat lunch at school wouldn't this be an issue, because if less than half of the school doesn't eat from the cafeteria the USDA would be spending unnecessary money.

This is why I have started a proposal, I want to know how many people eat at school, who eats fast food, and who brings food from home. In order for me to do this I will ask students what they want from the school in order for them to eat here. This way we could have an understanding on what the school needs to change for a healthier school and more food being sold at school.

In order to find this data I went around school asking close friends questions over what food they eat during school. The questions I asked were, I eat at school, what do you think of food? I eat my food from home, I go out of school to eat around California Valley's restaurants. From these questions I asked my fellow students I got, twelve males and four females eat outside of schools at fast food places. Two males and one female bring food from home because they don't like the food from school and rather not spend money on fast food. Finally for who eat at school five males eat at school and one female, the majority said they dislike the food but have to deal with it because they cannot go eat out every day.

In conclusion I found that California Valley is not doing its job by offering quality meals for its students. In my survey I can conclude that the majority of students are not happy with the food from California Valley forcing them to bring food from home or going to eat outside of school. I also found that most of the students I interviewed were eating fast food everyday outside of school, increasing their chances of obesity.