

Ten-Minute Anti-Plagiarism Exercise

Instructions: You have been asked to write a paper on the harmful effects of the fast food industry on American children. For one section of your paper, you decide to focus on the various ways that the Fast Food Industry markets its food to young children and decide to use Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation* as a source of information. Read over the following selection from that book and write a paragraph that paraphrases Schlosser's ideas, using one quotation from this source that you weave into your text.

Perfect Synergy

ALTHOUGH THE FAST FOOD chains annually spend about \$3 billion on television advertising, their marketing efforts directed at children extend far beyond such conventional ads. The McDonald's Corporation now operates more than eight thousand playgrounds at its restaurants in the United States. Burger King has more than two thousand. A manufacturer of "playlands" explains why fast food operators build these largely plastic structures: "Playlands bring in children, who bring parents who bring money." As American cities and towns spend less money on children's recreation, fast food restaurants have become gathering places for families with young children. Every month about 90 percent of American children between the ages of three and nine visit a McDonald's. The seesaws, slides, and pits full of plastic balls have been proven to be an effective lure. "But when it gets down to brass tacks," a Brandweek article on fast food notes, "the key to attracting kids is toys, toys, toys."

The fast food industry has forged promotional links with the nation's leading toy manufacturers, giving away simple toys with children's meals and selling more elaborate ones at a discount. The major toy crazes of recent years—including Pokémon cards, Cabbage Patch Kids, and Tamagotchis—have been abetted by fast food promotions. A successful promotion easily doubles or triples the weekly sales volume of children's meals. The chains often distribute numerous versions of a toy, encouraging repeat visits by small children and adult collectors who hope to obtain complete sets. In 1999 McDonald's distributed eighty different types of Furby. According to a publication called Tomart's Price Guide to McDonald's Happy Meal Collectibles, some fast food giveaways are now worth hundreds of dollars.

Rod Taylor, a Brandweek columnist, called McDonald's 1997 Teenie Beanie Baby giveaway one of the most successful promotions in the history of American advertising. At the time McDonald's sold about 10 million Happy Meals in a typical week. Over the course of ten days in April 1997, by including a Teenie Beanie Baby with each purchase, McDonald's sold about 100 million Happy Meals. Rarely has a marketing effort achieved such an extraordinary rate of sales among its intended consumers. Happy Meals are marketed to children between the ages of three and nine; within ten days about four Teenie Beanie Baby Happy Meals were sold for every American child in that age group. Not all of those Happy Meals were purchased for children. Many adult collectors bought Teenie Beanie Happy Meals, kept the dolls, and threw away the food.

Source: Eric Schlosser. *Fast Food Nation*. New York: HarperCollins, 1995.