

Extended Common Core Social Studies Lesson Plan Template

Lesson Title: Fast Food in the American Psyche

Author Name: Dolores Harper

Contact Information:

dqharper@washoeschools.net
Sparks High School
(775)353-5550

Appropriate for Grade Level(s): 11-12

US History Standard(s)/Applicable CCSS(s):

*H3.[9-12].5 Analyze major social movements in the United States and explain their impact on the changing social and political **culture***

*H2.[9-12].12 Describe the causes and effects of changing **demographics** and developing **suburbanization** in the United States.*

H4.[9-12].8 Explore the influence of popular U.S. culture on the culture of other nations and vice versa.

Common Core Standards:

CCSSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

Economics Standards:

E9.[6-8].2 Identify factors that affect purchasing decisions such as:

- Price
- **Income**
- Availability of substitutes
- **Self interest**

National Standards for High School Psychology (apa.org)

Development and Learning Domain

Content Standard 5: Childhood

5.2 Describe how memory and thinking ability develops.

5.3 Describe social, cultural, and emotional development through childhood.

Content Standard 6: Adolescence

6.4 Discuss the role of family and peers in adolescent development

[Type the company name]

Sociocultural Context Domain

Content Standard 1: Social cognition

Students are able to (performance standards):

1.1 Describe attributional explanations of behavior.

1.2 Describe the relationship between attitudes (implicit and explicit) and behavior.

1.3 Identify persuasive methods used to change attitudes.

Content Standard 2: Social influence

Students are able to (performance standards):

2.1 Describe the power of the situation.

2.2 Describe effects of others' presence on individuals' behavior.

2.3 Describe how group dynamics influence behavior.

2.4 Discuss how an individual influences group behavior.

Content Standard 3: Social relations

Students are able to (performance standards):

3.1 Discuss the nature and effects of stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination.

3.2 Describe determinants of pro-social behavior.

3.3 Discuss influences upon aggression and conflict

Research Methods, Measurement and Statistics Domain (if step 3A is used)

Content Standard 3: Basic concepts of data analysis

Students are able to (performance standards):

3.1 Define descriptive statistics and explain how they are used by psychological scientists.

3.2 Define forms of qualitative data and explain how they are used by psychological scientists.

3.3 Define correlation coefficients and explain their appropriate interpretation

Engagement Strategies: Journal entries, guided readings, groups, Fishbowl discussion, class discussion, video clip

Student Readings (list):

1. Selection from *Fast Food Nation* Schlosser, Eric
2. Excerpt from Fast Food F.A.C.T.S., 2010. "Fast Food FACTS in Brief", pgs. 9-11.
http://www.fastfoodmarketing.org/media/FastFoodFACTS_Report.pdf
3. "7 Highly Disturbing Trends in Junk Food Advertising to Children", 2012. Gottesdiener, Laura.
4. "The Immediate Effect Fast Food Has On Children", 2013, Lewis, Rachel
5. "Slow Down: How Our Fast-Paced World Is Making Us Sick", 2009. Buzzell, Linda

Total Time Needed: 140 minutes, add 20 minutes to include 3A optional assignment.

Lesson Outline:

1. Pre-Lesson Assignment: Students will be required to keep a diary for one week that accounts for food intake and physical activity. In addition, students will also track the number of hours of television watched each day, taking particular note of food and beverage advertisements.

2. Time: 5 minutes

Students watch YouTube video, "Fast food restaurants TV ads target kids" and reflect in journal.

Teacher is: showing video, ensuring students are writing personal response in journal
Students are: watching the video, writing in journal.

3. Time: 5 minutes

Discussion: Students compare food and TV habits in pairs or small groups, discussing similarities in behavior (amount of time watched, similar eating habits, etc.)

Teacher is: walking around room, keeping students on task.

Students are: engaging in conversation, sharing information with others in group.

3A. OPTIONAL – To further incorporate cross-curricular learning, students collect data from whole class and create a chart and determine correlation between exercise and TV viewing times (20 minutes) for the whole class.

4. Time: 5 minutes

Creating groups for JIGSAW activity (www.jigsaw.org/steps.htm for further information)

Teacher is: ensuring students are following instructions as they move into groups

Students are: in groups, number themselves from 1-5 and then grouping all ones together, twos together, etc.

5. Time: 20 minutes

Each group receives a different handout to read, and as a group will create a dialectical journal to share with original groups.

Teacher is: monitoring groups, ensuring they are on task and discussing articles (Rubric attached)

Students are: reading article, then creating individual journals as a group to bring back and share out with original groups.

6. Time: 15 minutes

Students return to original group and present their information to the rest of the group. Each student has 2-3 minutes to present to group.

Teacher is: Moving between groups to ensure students are listening to student speaking, taking notes, and also monitoring time.

Students are: Taking notes, listening to speaker, rotating speaker role every 2-3 minutes.

7. Time: 30 minutes

Discussion: Ten students are chosen at random to participate in Fishbowl discussion and will engage each other in a meaningful discussion of role of fast food in our society today.

(learner.org/workshops/tm1/workshop3/teaching2.html for further information)

Teacher is: Ensuring class is following discussion norms, keeping time

Students are: Group in Fishbowl is following norms and engaging in conversation based on readings.

Group not in discussion are taking notes, listening.

8. Time: 15 minutes

Debrief discussion: Students who were not in Fishbowl will have the opportunity to participate in a follow-up discussion.

Teacher is: Facilitating discussion, ensuring everyone is allowed opportunity to give input.

Students are: Continuing discussion as a class.

9. Time: 45 minutes, or for homework if not complete.

Students write a 1-2 page essay based on their journal, readings, class discussion answering the question – What consequences do we as a nation face as a result of fast food embedded in our daily lives? What is the role of fast food is in our society today as it relates to the student and society as a whole? Questions to consider include (but not limited to) what is the responsibility of parents, schools, and/or the government in curbing this epidemic?

10. Extended assignment – I-Research Paper

Students continue research and focus on one of the following topics

- Effects of fast food in advertising and stages of development
- Effects of diet and stress
- Increasing medical costs and what that means to the consumer
- Correlation between obesity and income levels across the U.S.

Description of Lesson Assessment: Through reading various articles and student collaboration, students will follow Dialectical Journal rubric as a guide in order to create basis for essay (Extended: I-Search paper).

How will students reflect on the process and their learning? Students will actively participate in group discussions, Fishbowl discussion and class discussion in order to guide the basis for their essays.

Link for how to do a Dialectical Journal:

<https://www.madison.k12.al.us/Schools/bhs/Documents/2013%20Summer%20Reading/Pre-AP%2010%20Dialectical-Journal-Handout.pdf>

Link for how to do an I-Search Paper:

<http://www.spokaneschools.org/cms/lib/WA01000970/Centricity/Domain/3241/3aTheISearchPaper.pdf>

Excerpt from *Fast Food Nation*, Schlosser, Eric. Pgs 21-22.

The first Carl's Jr. Restaurant opened in 1956 – the same year that America got its first shopping mall and that Congress passed the Interstate Highway Act. President Dwight D. Eisenhower had pushed hard for such a bill; during World War II, he had been enormously impressed by Hitler's *Reichsautobahn*, the world's first superhighway system. The Interstate Highway Act brought autobahns to the United States and became the largest public works project in the nation's history, building 46,000 miles of road with more than \$130 billion of federal money. The new highways spurred car sales, truck sales, and the construction of new suburban homes. Carl's first self service restaurant was a success, and he soon opened others near California's new freeway off ramps. The star atop his drive-in sign became the mascot of his fast food chain. It was a smiling star in little booties, holding a burger and a shake.

Excerpt from *Fast Food Nation*, Schosser, Eric. Pgs. 241-242

As people eat more meals outside the home, they consume more calories, less fiber, and more fat. Commodity prices have fallen so low that the fast food industry has greatly increased its portion sizes, without reducing profits, in order to attract customers. The size of a burger has become one of its main selling points...

A number of attempts to introduce healthy dishes (such as the McLean Deluxe, a hamburger partly composed of seaweed) have proven unsuccessful. A taste for fat developed in childhood is difficult to lose as an adult. At the moment, the fast food industry is heavily promoting menu items that contain bacon...

The obesity epidemic that began in the United States during the late 1970s is now spreading to the rest of the world, with fast food as one of its vectors. Between 1984 and 1993, the number of fast food restaurants in Great Britain roughly doubled – and so did the obesity rate among adults. The British now eat more fast food than any other nationality in Western Europe. They also have the highest obesity rate...

The immediate effect fast food has on children

Rachel Lewis

May 13, 2013

"Please! Mum! Please! Please! I really want one!" If constant whining has caused you to swerve into a drive-through to buy your kids burgers and chips, you're not alone.

Forty percent of UAE parents admitted that they often give into their children's demands for junk food, according to a recent survey compiled for Al Aan TV's *Nabd Al Arab* (Arabs' Pulse) program and *The National*, conducted by YouGov. But the next time you're thinking about buying dinner on the go, bear in mind the impact it will have on your kids before the day is over.

Junk food will encourage your child to eat more

The fats, sugar and salt in fast food draw kids like a magnet, largely because they appeal to a child's "primordial tastes". "From an evolutionary point of view, humans are hard-wired to crave high-calorie food as a survival mechanism, so each time we see, smell or eat junk food, many chemicals and neurotransmitters are released in our body," explains Rashi Chowdhary, a nutritionist based in Dubai. (rashichowdhary.com)

"When your child bites into a burger, his brain reward system gets activated since dopamine, which is the main neurotransmitter responsible for pleasure and excitement, gets secreted. And then he will feel a complete lack of control and an intense demand from his brain for more," adds Chowdhary.

If that isn't enough to convince you to ditch the takeaway, a study published in the *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine* (a medical journal published by the American Medical Association) found that once children have eaten fast food, they consume more calories and fewer nutrients for the rest of the day. On days when kids ate fast food, compared with days when they ate at home, adolescents and young children consumed an additional 309 and 126 calories, respectively.

Junk food will damage arteries immediately

Experts have known for years that long-term consumption of junk food clogs arteries, but recently they've recognised that this damage begins the same day. A study published in the *Canadian Journal of Cardiology* indicates that damage to the arteries occurs almost immediately after just one – that's right, one – junk food meal.

Junk food will cause school work to suffer

Diet has a significant effect on children's study habits. Junk food and foods with high-sugar content deplete energy levels and the ability to concentrate for extended periods of time. "If a kid is having sweets, chocolate croissants or sweetened beverages during the first break time at school instead of his fruit portion or his sandwich, he would definitely feel hungry within an hour and that would disrupt his concentration in class, and could affect his overall performance in school," explains Chirine Watfa, a dietitian at Health Factory, Dubai (www.healthfactory.com).

Want proof? In a study published in *Child: Care, Health and Development* (a European public health journal), researchers analysed the fast-food consumption and test scores in math and reading of 12,000 fifth-graders. They found that children who ate fast food four to six times within a given week tested significantly lower in math and reading compared with children who did not.

Junk food will make your kid depressed

Eating foods rich in antioxidants, such as fruits and vegetables, and healthy fats, such as cold-water fish and nuts, leads to positive energy and moods – both of which derive from positive brain function. A diet high in fast food lacks these nutritional benefits, increasing the risk of depression.

Junk food will put your child off healthy food

The artificial taste of junk food is thought to be addictive and children used to spicy junk food may have trouble adjusting their palates to relatively blander healthy foods.

“Another problem is that junk food tends to replace other, more nutritious, foods,” says Watfa. “When children are snacking on chips and cookies, they’re usually not having enough fruits and vegetables, which will decrease their vitamin C and fibre intakes.”

Junk food will cause constipation

Fast food typically lacks fiber. The less fiber children consume, the more likely they are to develop constipation, which can cause abdominal pain and discomfort. Will they know about it by the end of the day? Probably.

Junk food will make them irritable

“The high content of sugar in junk food causes fluctuations in children’s blood glucose levels,” says Chowdhary. “This makes them edgy, sleepy and irritable throughout the day and leaves them with no motivation to be active.”

Junk food will ruin bedtime

Having sugary drinks or fruit juice with dinner even twice a week can affect children’s sleep and wake-up cycle. The caffeine from sodas acts as a stimulant, keeping them awake longer and negatively affects their metabolism. “Studies have shown that moderate to high caffeine consumers [100 to 300mg of caffeine] have more disturbed and more interrupted sleep than low- or no-caffeine consumers,” says Watfa

By Linda Buzzell

Slow Down: How Our Fast-Paced World Is Making Us Sick

July 1, 2009

Not so very long ago, humans -- like the rest of the animals and plants on earth -- moved through our natural cycles at nature's pace. Time was marked by the passing of the seasons, the life cycles of human, animal and plant life and the yet grander cycles of the moon and the other celestial bodies.

Homo sapiens, a late-appearing species in the long history of our unimaginably ancient planet and universe, evolved during the recent (as the universe views these things!) Pleistocene era, adapted for a life intimately connected with and expressive of our natural surroundings on the African savannah and beyond.

And this is how we lived for millennia.

In the last 150 years, however, the human relationship with time has radically changed. Some say the problems started earlier, with the development of agriculture or writing, but it was really the Industrial Revolution -- the rise of the Machine -- that put humans in thrall to mechanical processes and machine time. And the recent exponential speeding up into Cybertime has accelerated the process still further. Industrial time was bad enough (Charlie Chaplin did a wonderful job of visualizing that "cog in the wheel" feeling in his film "Modern Times") but Cybertime can be dizzyingly discombobulating for a Pleistocene primate.

And that's how many modern people feel -- completely frazzled and out of synch with our deepest selves.

The results of this disconnection from nature and nature's pace show up in therapists' and doctors' offices every day. Living under unnatural time pressures causes a myriad of psychological, social and physical ailments. Delinked from the natural rhythms of our bodies and the rest of the planet, we struggle with diminishing success to adapt to the strange mechanical and disembodied world we have created.

As a practicing psychotherapist and ecotherapist, when I see patients who are suffering from depression or anxiety I ask them to keep a time-journal in which they record the hours and minutes spent each day outside, as well as the hours spent inside in front of a screen. My clients are often shocked to realize how disassociated they have become from nature and our species' natural ways of living, and the effect this disconnection is having on their psyche. In fact, a 2007 study from the University of Essex shows that a daily "dose" of walking outside in nature can be as effective at treating mild to moderate depression as expensive antidepressant medications that can sometimes have negative side-effects.

Time poverty is now a recognized psychological and social stressor. In a speeded-up, highly complex society, there just isn't enough time for everything: our demanding jobs, our interlocking bureaucratic

responsibilities (taxes, insurance, legal issues), our loved one, kids, our community (including the rest of nature), plus commuting and keeping up with traditional media and endless 24/7 online communications. Constantly rushing to keep up as we inevitably fall further behind, we find ourselves destroying not only our own health, but our habitat and the habitat of the people, plants and animals with whom we share the planet.

In my recently published book, Ecotherapy: Healing with Nature in Mind [3] (Sierra Club Books, 2009) therapists and experts from many backgrounds discuss some of the ways that nature can help to heal problems like stress and anxiety. What suggestions can ecotherapists offer to help us slow down to a more natural pace of living? Here are a few simple things that can make a difference:

- **Reconnect with place.** We can learn to resist the constant rushing around and settle into and tend a beloved location, taking time to learn its secrets and hear its whisperings.
- **Reconnect with companion and wild animals.** Animals slow us down to our natural animal rhythms, which is why animal-assisted therapy works so well at lowering blood pressure and healing psychological ills of many kinds. The simple act of petting a cat or watching the birds flit through the trees is profoundly healing.
- **Reconnect with plants.** A simple pot on a windowsill slows us down to the pace of a seed, a seedling, a leaf and a flower. A tree on the street, if contemplated and touched, offers its blessings during a busy day.
- **Reconnect with the cycles of human life.** Instead of demanding that we remain in perpetual-teenager mode (the preferred state in our society, it seems), allowing ourselves to become true initiated adults and then elders honors the natural pace of human life rather than fighting it. Nature teaches us that seeds emerge, plants flourish, bloom, fruit and then wither and slip away -- valuable wisdom for our own lives when we encounter the inevitable transitions in our own and others' lives.
- **Reconnect with our wild bodies.** Untamed nature is to be found not only in far-away wilderness but in the wilds of our bloodstream, our digestive processes, our breath. Any practice that brings our attention back to our bodies is wilderness ecotherapy. Yoga and ecstatic dance offer release from the controlling modern ego and access to what ecopsychologists call "the ecological self." And once we reach peace with our animal bodies, our souls naturally open up to the larger Spirit in which we are embedded.
- **Spend more time outdoors in wild nature.** Most of us are indoors most of the time. Our bodies and souls cry out for long walks on a beach, contemplation in a forest or a few minutes in a nearby vacant lot near a stream. These times slow life down to a healing, natural pace.

Making just a few of these simple changes can radically shift how we feel. Ecopsychological research is now proving that reconnecting with nature and more natural living performs a host of psychological miracles, including lowering depression, improving our sense of well being, calming our anxieties, raising self-esteem and giving us a sense of belonging to the great whole of which we are a part.

Source URL: http://www.alternet.org/story/140994/slow_down%3A_how_our_fast-paced_world_is_making_us_sick

Even though McDonald's and Burger King show only healthy sides and beverages in child-targeted advertising, the restaurants automatically serve french fries with kids' meals at least 86% of the time, and soft drinks at least 55% of the time.

Fast Food FACTS in Brief

Fast food marketing is relentless.

- The fast food industry spent more than \$4.2 billion dollars in 2009 on TV advertising and other media.
- The average preschooler (2-5 years) saw 2.8 TV ads per day for fast food; children (6-11 years) saw 3.5; and teens (12-17 years) saw 4.7.
- Young people's exposure to fast food TV ads has increased. Compared to 2003, preschoolers viewed 21% more fast food ads in 2009, children viewed 34% more, and teens viewed 39% more.
- Although McDonald's and Burger King have pledged to improve food marketing to children, they increased their volume of TV advertising from 2007 to 2009. Preschoolers saw 21% more ads for McDonald's and 9% more for Burger King, and children viewed 26% more ads for McDonald's and 10% more for Burger King.
- Even though McDonald's and Burger King only showed their "better-for-you" foods in child-targeted marketing, their ads did not encourage consumption of these healthier choices. Instead, child-targeted ads focused on toy giveaways and building brand loyalty.
- Children saw more than child-targeted ads. More than 60% of fast food ads viewed by preschoolers and children promoted fast food items other than kids' meals.

Youth-targeted marketing has spread to company websites and other digital media.

- McDonald's web-based marketing starts with children as young as age 2 at Ronald.com.
- McDonald's and Burger King created sophisticated websites with advergames and virtual worlds to engage children (e.g., McWorld.com, HappyMeal.com, and ClubBK.com).
- McDonald's 13 websites got 365,000 unique child visitors and 294,000 unique teen visitors on average each month in 2009.
- Nine restaurant Facebook pages had more than one million fans in 2009, and Starbucks' boasted more than 11.3 million.
- Smartphone apps were available for eight fast food chains, providing another opportunity to reach young consumers anytime, anywhere.

Fast food marketing also targets teens and ethnic and minority youth - often with less healthy items.

- Taco Bell targeted teens in its TV and radio advertising. Dairy Queen, Sonic, and Domino's also reached disproportionately more teens with ads for their desserts and snacks, and Burger King advertised teen-targeted promotions.

[Type the company name]

- Hispanic preschoolers saw 290 Spanish-language fast food TV ads in 2009 and McDonald's was responsible for one-quarter of young people's exposure to Spanish-language fast food advertising.
- African American children and teens saw at least 50% more fast food ads on TV in 2009 than their white peers. That translated into twice the number of fast food calories viewed daily compared to white children.
- McDonald's and KFC specifically targeted African American youth with TV advertising, targeted websites, and banner ads.

Fast food marketing works.

- Eighty-four percent of parents reported taking their child to a fast food restaurant at least once a week; 66% reported going to McDonald's in the past week.
- Forty percent of parents reported that their child asks to go to McDonald's at least once a week; 15% of preschoolers ask to go every day.

Most restaurants do offer some healthful and lower-calorie choices on their regular and children's menus, but unhealthy options are the default.

- Just 12 of 3,039 possible kids' meal combinations met nutrition criteria for preschoolers; 15 met nutrition criteria for older children.
- Just 17% of regular menu items qualified as healthy choices.
- Snacks and dessert items contained as many as 1,500 calories, which is five times more than the 200 to 300 calorie snack for active teens recommended by the American Dietetic Association.
- The average restaurant had 15 signs promoting specific menu items, but just 4% promoted healthy menu items.
- When ordering a kids' meal, restaurant employees at McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's, and Taco Bell automatically served french fries or another unhealthy side dish more than 84% of the time. A soft drink or other unhealthy beverage was served automatically at least 55% of the time.
- Subway offered healthy sides and beverages 60% of the time, making it the only fast food restaurant in our study to routinely provide healthy choices.

As a result:

- Teens between the ages of 13 and 18 purchased 800 to 1,100 calories in an average fast food visit.
- At least 30% of calories in menu items purchased by children and teens were from sugar and saturated fat.
- At most restaurants, young people purchased at least half of their maximum daily recommended sodium intake in just one fast food meal.
- Teens ordered more fast food than any other age group during non-meal times after school and in the evening.

Recommendations

Young people must consume less of the calorie-dense, nutrient-poor foods served at fast food restaurants. Parents and schools can and should do more to teach children how to make healthy choices. Above all, fast food restaurants must drastically change their current marketing practices so that children and teens do not receive continuous encouragement to seek out food that will severely damage their health.

Fast food restaurants must establish meaningful standards for child-targeted marketing that apply to all fast food restaurants-not just those who voluntarily participate in the Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative.

- Nutrition criteria for foods presented in child-targeted marketing must apply to all kids' meals served, not just items pictured in the marketing.
- Restaurants must redefine "child-targeted" marketing to include TV ads and other forms of marketing viewed by large numbers of children but not exclusively targeted to them.
- McDonald's must stop marketing directly to preschoolers.

Fast food restaurants must do more to develop and promote lower-calorie and more nutritious menu items.

http://www.fastfoodmarketing.org/fast_food_facts_in_brief.aspx

DIALECTICAL JOURNAL SCORING RUBRIC

| CRITICAL READER | CONNECTED READER | THOUGHTFUL READER | LITERAL READER | LIMITED READER |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Detailed, elaborate responses. | Detailed responses. | Somewhat detailed responses. | Simple, factual responses. | Perfunctory responses. |
| You can “read between the lines” of the text. | You can construct a thoughtful, believable interpretation of the text. | You make connections to your own past experiences, feelings, or knowledge, but don’t explain in enough detail. | You accept the text literally without thinking of different possibilities in meaning. | You find the text confusing, but don’t attempt to figure it out. |
| You think about the meaning of the text in terms of a larger or universal significance, as aspect of self or life in general. | You fill in gaps in the text and show some ability to make meaning from what you read. | You rarely change your ideas about the text even after you re-read it. | You are reluctant to change your ideas about the text, even after re-reading it. | You don’t change your ideas about the text after re-reading it. |
| You create your own meaning through personal connections and references to other texts. | You create your own meaning through personal connections and references to other texts. | You may agree or disagree with ideas in the text, but you don’t thoroughly explain or support your opinions. | You don’t reach beyond the obvious to make connections to the text; you make few connections, which lack sufficient detail. | You make few or no connections to the text and your ideas lack development. |
| You consider different possible interpretations as you read | You can explain the more general significance of the text beyond the facts. | You ask simple questions about the text. | You are sometimes confused by unclear or difficult sections of the text. | |
| You experiment with different ideas or think up original or unpredictable responses | You raise important questions about the text. | | | |
| You carry on an ongoing dialogue with the writer; you question, agree, disagree, appreciate, or object. | You explain why you disagree or agree with something in the text, and you explain and support your reaction. | | | |

[Type the company name]

Sample Essay

Fast food is an integral part of our lives today. It's everywhere – from the advertisements we see on television, to the seemingly endless amount of restaurants around town. We like fast food because it's cheap, easy to get, convenient and of course, it tastes pretty good. With our fast paced lives today, who has time to actually cook meals? The problem with fast food is that the United States has now become the leader in the world – for being obese. While we love the convenience and price of fast food, the big question is what price are we going to pay in the future?

It seems as though we have had fast food ingrained into our way of thinking at an early age. Companies like McDonald's and Burger King spend billions of dollars each year in advertising and their main target is children. McDonald's "Happy Meal" includes a toy or game, often times in conjunction with a hit movie or video game. Children see commercials for these toys and ask their parents repeatedly until they give in and take them to get the Happy Meal. The connection between food and a treat is made early in a child's development and the habits formed at an early age make this an even more desirable way of eating. As children get to the teenage years, the desire for the toy may have decreased, but the habit for the food has been set. And how do fast food companies address this problem? Games and prizes are offered to those who participate in a survey AFTER the food has been purchased. Children and teenagers don't see the connection, but the fast food companies have won because they have created long term clients.

Fast food companies haven't gotten away with this now that the awareness of obesity rates in the United States has become so alarmingly high. The quick fix to make themselves look better to the public is to incorporate "healthy" foods into the menus. However, meals like salads are just as fattening when salad dressing is added. Other changes that McDonald's made were to substitute apple slices in place of French fries. This hasn't been too successful, but change doesn't happen overnight. Through books like *Fast Food Nation* and documentaries such as *Super Size Me* have exposed the fast food industry as unhealthy and (although debatable) unethical. This awareness has only addressed part of the problem. The fast food industry cannot be solely to blame for obesity rates. Where does personal responsibility come in?

Although parents can't control what teenagers eat and how they spend money, parents are the ones who are responsible for buying fast food for kids when they are young. With

more and more mothers working to support the family, food choices are often times an afterthought. Parents can also fall into the trap of convenience. Who wants to go home and make dinner when you've been busy all day at work? The average family eats fast food three days a week. And where do we eat our dinner? We're sitting in front of the TV. Parents have a responsibility to make sure that their kids are eating healthier foods and not developing bad habits. Bad habits and a sedentary lifestyle have led to an epidemic that seems to be spinning out of control. In the long run, parents are going to actually pay more because with the rise in obesity, there is also a rise in health problems resulting from bad eating habits.

Kids are developing diseases that were mostly only common in adults. Heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure are becoming more commonplace in kids and teens today. Even more disturbing is the rise in depression among kids and teens. Too much processed foods and not enough healthy foods like fruits and vegetables can lead to depression which can compound feelings of isolation due to being overweight.

So what's the solution? Healthy diet and exercise are the first answers people give, but it's not that easy. If it were, then we wouldn't have the health problems we have today. The habits that we create for ourselves need to be broken. Restrictions are being made in our schools' cafeteria now. No longer can one order a soda and candy bar, lunch meals are served with milk and some sort of fruit or vegetable. Is it the school's responsibility to ensure students eat healthy? Is it the government's responsibility to put a "sin" tax on unhealthy drinks like soda? Responsibility starts with self. The responsibility of eating in moderation, stepping away from the TV and computer and exercising is a good start.