

Writing Assignments Using Argument-Persuasion as a Pattern of Development

1. In their essay, Marlow and Abdulkadirov attempt to persuade their readers that government intervention is not the answer to our nation's obesity problem, and they employ a modified Rogerian strategy. Write an essay about an issue that is important to you, and use the Rogerian strategy to acknowledge differing viewpoints, point out areas of common ground, and finally, present evidence for your position. You might address an issue such as requiring all students at your school to live on campus during their first year, or banning freshmen and sophomores from having cars on campus. Or you might address a more widespread issue such as providing birth control without parental consent to people aged eleven to seventeen, or requiring all public school students to wear uniforms.
2. Marlow and Abdulkadirov take a stand against government intervention to help control obesity. Many others, however, including Bittman, maintain an opposing view. Write an essay in which you argue that in light of the seriousness of the obesity problem in the United States, government intervention is both appropriate and necessary. Research specific evidence to support your position, and include at least one image to strengthen your argument.

Writing Assignment Combining Patterns of Development

3. In their argumentation-persuasion essay, Marlow and Abdulkadirov state in the opening paragraph that although "it is clear the United States is facing a rising obesity problem... we have yet to determine a successful way to tackle it." Write an essay in which you *define* obesity and then *illustrate* possible solutions to this problem. You might interview one or more individuals who were once obese but managed to get their weight under control to find out how they accomplished the feat. You might also conduct research to find out more about programs such as Weight Watchers, Medifast, and Nutrisystem that claim to help individuals lose weight and keep it off. You could also explore how operations such as gastric bypass and gastric banding help some individuals control their weight.

Mark Bittman

Lead food columnist for *The New York Times*, Mark Bittman is also a popular television personality and an award-winning best-selling cookbook author. His publications include *How to Cook Everything* (1998), *How to Cook Everything Vegetarian* (2007), *Food Matters: A Guide to Conscious Eating* (2008), and *VB6: Eat Vegan Before 6:00 to Lose Weight and Restore Your Health...for Good* (2013). The essay that follows was first published in the online *New York Times* on June 10, 2014.

Pre-Reading Journal

MyWritingLab

Our nation's obesity problem has been the recent subject of countless talk shows, news broadcasts, and magazine articles. How has all of the "buzz" surrounding this

issue affected you? Are you more conscious of how much you weigh and of what you eat than you were a few years ago? Do you see correlations in your own life among your health, your weight, and the food you consume? Explore these ideas in your journal.

What Causes Weight Gain "

If I ask you what constitutes "bad" eating, the kind that leads to obesity and a variety of connected diseases, you're likely to answer, "Salt, fat and sugar." This trilogy of evil has been drilled into us for decades, yet that's not an adequate answer. 1

We don't know everything about the dietary links to chronic disease, but the best-qualified people argue that real food is more likely to promote health and less likely to cause disease than hyperprocessed food. And we can further refine that message: Minimally processed plants should dominate our diets. (This isn't just me saying this; the Institute of Medicine and the Department of Agriculture agree.) 2

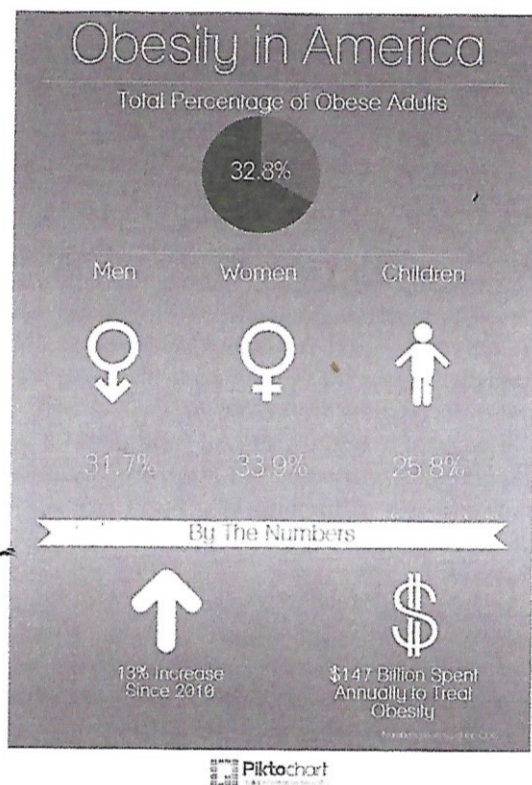
And yet we're in the middle of a public health emergency that isn't being taken seriously enough. We should make it a national priority to create two new programs, a research program to determine precisely what causes diet-related chronic illnesses (on top of the list is "Just how bad is sugar?"), and a program that will get this single, simple message across: Eat Real Food. 3

Real food solves the salt/fat/sugar problem. Yes, excess salt may cause or exacerbate high blood pressure, and lowering sodium intake in people with high blood pressure helps. But salt is only one of several risk factors in developing high blood pressure, and those who eat a diverse diet and few processed foods—which supply more than 80 percent of the sodium in typical American diets—need not worry about salt intake (Nestle). 4

"Fat" is a loaded word and a complicated topic, and the jury is still out. Most naturally occurring fats are probably essential, but too much of some fats—and, again, it may be the industrially produced fats used in hyperprocessed foods—seems harmful. Eat real food and your fat intake will probably be fine. 5

"Sugar" has come to represent (or it should) the entire group of processed, nutritionally worthless caloric sweeteners, including table sugar, high fructose corn syrup and so-called healthy alternatives like agave syrup, brown rice syrup, reduced fruit juice and a dozen others. 6

All appear to be damaging because they're *added* sugars, as opposed to naturally occurring ones, like those in actual fruit, which are not problematic. And although added fructose may be more harmful than the others, it could also be that those highly refined carbohydrates that our bodies rapidly 7



Source: "America Tops List of 10 Most Obese Countries" by Amir Khan, *US News: Health and Wellness*, May 28, 2014. Based on figures from the CDC.

break down to sugar—white bread, for example—are equally unhealthy. Again: These are hyperprocessed foods.

In sum: Sugar is not the enemy, or not the only enemy. The enemy is hyperprocessed food, including sugar.

In the United States—the world's most obese country—the most recent number for the annual cost of obesity is close to \$200 billion (Khan).

(Obesity-related costs are incalculable but could easily exceed \$1 trillion annually. Wanna balance the budget? Eat real food.) The amount the National Institutes of Health spends for obesity-related research is less than \$1 billion annually, and there is no single large, convincing study (and no small study will do) that proposes to solve the underlying causes of obesity ("Estimates"). If the solution were as simple as "salt, fat, sugar" or the increasingly absurd-sounding "calories in, calories out," surely we'd have made some progress by now.

We know that eating real food is a general solution, but a large part of 11
 our dietary problems might stem from something as simple as the skyrocket-
 ing and almost unavoidable consumption of caloric sweeteners and/or
 hyperprocessed carbs, which are in 80 percent of our food products ("Why
 Katie Couric").

Or it could be those factors in tandem with others, like the degradation 12
 of our internal networks of bacteria, which in turn could be caused by the
 overuse of antibiotics or other environmental issues. Or it could be even
 more complex.

The point is we need to know for certain, because until we have an 13
 actual smoking gun, it's difficult to persuade lawmakers to enact needed
 policies. (Smoking gun studies are difficult in the diet world, but throwing
 up our hands in the face of complexity serves the interests of processed-food
 pushers.) Look no further than the example of tobacco.

Meanwhile, if we had to pick one target in the interim, caloric sweeteners 14
 are unquestionably it; they're well correlated with weight gain (and their re-
 duction equally well correlated with weight loss), Type 2 diabetes and many
 other problems (Johnson et al.). How to limit the intake of sugar? A soda
 tax is a start, proper labeling would be helpful, and—quite possibly most
 important, because it's going to take us a generation or two to get out of
 this mess—restrictions on marketing sweet "food" to children.

There's no reason to delay action on those kinds of moves. But let's 15
 get the science straight so that firm, convincing, sound, evenhanded rec-
 ommendations can be made based on the best possible evidence. And
 meanwhile, let's also get the simple message straight: It's "Eat Real Food."

Works Cited

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