2005

Chew on This: Everything You Don't Want to Know About Fast Food

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Hamar, AnnMarie (2005) "Chew on This: Everything You Don't Want to Know About Fast Food," Children's Book and Media Review: Vol. 26 : Iss. 5 , Article 8.
Available at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol26/iss5/8

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Chew on This is an eye-opening, often unsettling, expose of the fast food industry and its influence in the lives of American children and teenagers. Written by Fast Food Nation author Eric Schlosser, along with Charles Wilson, the text begins with a brief history of fast food before launching into detailed explanations of how the food itself is prepared and the consequences of overindulgence.

Many of the industry's practices described by the authors are disturbing. For example, it is not uncommon for fast food corporations to plan “cradle-to-grave advertising strategies, hoping that childhood fondness for a brand will lead to a lifetime of purchases.” The authors also cite how fast food and meat industry workers are among the most poorly treated and lowest paid in the United States, how corporations persuade districts to allow them to sell their products in the schools, and how some of the larger corporations are able to influence Congress in the areas of the minimum wage standard and food handling safety. Additionally, they describe the appalling conditions in the sweat shops that produce toys for Happy Meals. Fortunately, there are also some encouraging stories such as that of Kristina Clark, who successfully lobbied to have the soda pop machines removed from her school.

The text is not as overpowering as Fast Food Nation, but it still manages to convey a powerful message about how what you eat affects your health. An extensive section of notes documents the authors' claims. Considering the current concerns about the obesity epidemic in the United States, this is an important read and a valuable addition to any library.