

PinkMonkey® Literature Notes on . . .

For the complete study guide, visit:

<http://monkeynote.stores.yahoo.net/>

Sample MonkeyNotes

Note: this sample contains only excerpts and does not represent the full contents of the booknote. This will give you an idea of the format and content.

Fast Food Nation

The Dark Side of the All-American Meal

by

Eric Schlosser

2001



MonkeyNotes Study Guide by Laurie Lahey

<http://monkeynote.stores.yahoo.net/index.html>

Reprinted with permission from TheBestNotes.com Copyright © 2006, All Rights Reserved
Distribution without the written consent of TheBestNotes.com is strictly prohibited.

KEY LITERARY ELEMENTS

LIST OF CHARACTERS

Note: Most of the characters discussed in this book are real-life and well-known icons of the American retail food industry. Please keep in mind that the author of this book had an intended purpose of portraying the American fast food industry as a socially unconcerned bastion of corporate greed influenced only by the collection of dollars through the exploit of the naiveté and health of its citizens. Others may.....

Carl N. Karcher — Carl is one of the American fast-food industry's pioneers. He was born in 1917 in Ohio and dropped out of school after the eighth grade. At twenty-years-old, Carl moved to Anaheim, California where he began his first hotdog stand. Carl eventually turned his hotdog stands into drive-in.....

Richard and Maurice McDonald — Richard and Maurice were brothers from New Hampshire who began the first McDonald's restaurant (called The McDonald Brothers Burger Bar Drive-In) in

William Rosenberg — William dropped out of school at age fourteen. He worked as a salesman, delivered telegrams, and sold sandwiches and coffee. Finally, in 1948 he opened a coffee and donut.....

Glen W. Bell, Jr. — Glen was a World War II veteran who decided to open a Mexican-food

Keith G. Cramer and Matthew Burns — Keith owned a drive-in restaurant in Daytona Beach, Florida....

Dave Thomas — Dave dropped out of school at fifteen-years-old. After working as a bus boy and a cook, he eventually founded Wendy's Old Fashioned Hamburgers restaurant in Columbus, Ohio in 1969. Today, thousands of Wendy's restaurant's still bear his daughters name and remain popular.....

Thomas S. Monaghan — Tom was a former Marine (1956-1959) who spent his childhood in an orphanage and various foster homes, While a student at the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor) he and his brother James purchased a small pizza store in Ypsilanti, Michigan named DomiNick's. The restaurant later.....

Harland Sanders — Harland left school at twelve-years-old and practiced various professions, including farm hand, fireman, lawyer, and doctor (these last two, without licenses). Eventually, he came to.....

Ray Kroc — Ray was a high school dropout from Illinois selling milk-shake mixers in Southern California, when, in 1954 he met the McDonald brothers. He wondered why they needed so many milk-shake....

Walt Disney — Walt Disney was another high school dropout from Illinois, who became Ray Kroc's biggest rival when he wouldn't put a McDonald's in Disneyland. Walt Disney's empire became.....

Dave Feamster - Dave owns the Little Caesars restaurant in Pueblo, CO. After he got.....

J.R. Simplot — J.R. Simplot was born in 1909 and grew up working on his family's farm in Idaho. When he dropped out of school and left home at fifteen, he found work in a potato house. By age sixteen, he.....

SHORT PLOT/CHAPTER SUMMARY (Synopsis)

This book is divided into two sections, "The American Way," which interrogates the beginnings of the Fast Food Nation within the context of post-World War II America; and "Meat and Potatoes," which examines the specific mechanizations of the fast- food industry, including the chemical flavoring of the food, the production

For the complete study guide: <http://monkeynote.stores.yahoo.net/>

of cattle and chickens, the working conditions of beef industry, the dangers of eating meat, and the global context of fast food as an American cultural export.

Fast Food Nation opens with discussion of Carl N. Karcher and the McDonalds brothers, examining their roles as pioneers of the fast-food industry in southern California. This discussion is followed by an examination of Ray Kroc and Walt Disney's complicated relationship as well as each man's rise to.....

BACKGROUND INFORMATION - BIOGRAPHY

Eric Schlosser was born in 1959 in Manhattan; though, he spent his childhood in Los Angeles. Schlosser studied American history at Princeton and British imperialist history at Oxford University. In 1985 he wrote the musical *Americans*, treating American imperialism. *Fast Food Nation* was Schlosser's first....

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

This book covers American history and culture, post-World War II. This time was especially prosperous for many Americans, particularly white middle-class men who had fought in the war and were able to reap the benefits of the G.I. Bill and the booming economy. For many minorities, this time was far less promising, as the benefits of the 60's civil rights movement and integration were yet to occur and even then, slow to impact society as a whole. The specific period directly after WWII seemed especially prosperous because the world war had effectively ended the decade long Great Depression for the Americans. This post-war economic boom arguably lasted until 1973. Schlosser sees the Reagan presidential administration as....

GENRE

Fast Food Nation is a work of non-fiction. It is important to note the differences between non-fiction writing such as *Fast Food Nation* and novels. A novel is a fictional narrative in which literary....

CHAPTER SUMMARIES AND NOTES

Chapter 1 "The Founding Fathers"

Summary

Chapter 1 opens with discussion of Carl N. Karcher, one of fast food's pioneers. Carl was born in 1917 in Ohio. He quit school after eighth grade and spent long hours farming with his father. When he was twenty years old, his uncle offered him a job in his Feed and Seed store in Anaheim, CA. Carl moved out to California, where he met his wife Margaret and began his own family. Margaret and Carl bought a hotdog cart; Margaret sold hotdogs across the street from a Goodyear factory while Carl worked at a bakery. During this time California's population was rapidly expanding, as was the auto industry. Carl eventually opened a Drive-In Barbeque restaurant. The post-WWII economy provided him with plenty of customers.

Nearby, the McDonald brothers were running their own restaurant, "McDonald's Famous Hamburgers." It was the McDonald brothers who began the Speedee Service System, which brought customers out of their cars and into their highly-efficient restaurant. Inspired by McDonalds, Carl Karcher opened his own self-service restaurant, Carl Jr.'s. Eisenhower's Interstate Highway Act brought even more people to eat in self-service restaurants. Entrepreneurs from throughout the nation came to observe the McDonald's phenomenon. During this period many of the fast-food places that remain today were started: Taco Bell, Dunkin' Donuts, Wendy's, Domino's, and Kentucky Fried Chicken.

During the Arab oil embargo of 1973, fast-food restaurants underwent a bad scare, but they recovered. Carl Karcher ran into his own difficulties throughout his career with Carl Jr.'s; however when asked how he felt about all the changes, Carl responded that he believes in progress. He does not miss the good old days.

Notes

This chapter provides a historical backdrop from which Schlosser's discussion of the fast-food nation will begin. Here, the author provides a somewhat nostalgic look into the exciting post-World War II era when the economy was great and big dreams were possible. Interestingly, Schlosser is virtually silent about the tumultuous race relations in Southern California in this period. While he briefly mentions the Ku Klux Klan on page 14, he says nothing about the presence of Mexican Americans. He might have used the founding of Taco Bell to discuss how white Americans in this time and place appropriated images of Mexico in very specific ways. Moreover, Schlosser cites Cary McWilliams when discussing the atmosphere of the 1940s, yet chooses to overlook her seminal study *North from Mexico* (1949) in which she interrogates the fierce racism Mexican Americans faced. This study suggests a conspiracy of those in power to put Mexican-American youths in jail for a murder they did not commit in the mid-1940s. For further reading, one might consult Eduardo Obregón Pagán's *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race, & Riot in Wartime L.A.* (2003), which addresses the tensions between the U.S. Navy, police, the white middle class, and Mexican Americans during World War II.

Chapter 2

Summary

In this chapter, Schlosser examines Ray Kroc and Walt Disney's complicated relationship as well as each man's rise to fame. This chapter also considers the intricate, profitable methods of advertising to children.

During a visit to the Ray A. Kroc Museum, Schlosser observes the Disneyesque tone that pervades the space. Schlosser claims that this is only one of many similarities shared between the McDonald's and Walt Disney Corporations. Both Kroc and Disney were born in Illinois a year apart; they both dropped out of high school; they served together in World War I; they both moved to Southern California after the war. They both became geniuses at marketing their products to children.

Kroc had a variety of careers before he involved himself with McDonald's. In 1954 he was selling milk-shake mixers and wondered why the McDonald brothers needed eight. Kroc convinced the brothers, who were more than happy with the money they were making at their restaurant, to sell him the right to franchise McDonald's. Kroc sent Disney a letter, inquiring if there might be room for his restaurant in Disney's new park. A deal never materialized.

Schlosser examines Walt Disney's shrewd business side by demonstrating how Disney appropriated Henry Ford's mass-production techniques in his studio. Moreover, during the 1941 strike at his studio, Disney showed no sympathy for the union. Later he appeared as a friendly witness for the House Un-American Activities Committee, served as a secret informer for the FBI, and supported the Hollywood blacklist. Ray Kroc shared some of Disney's political philosophy—which became apparent in his support for Richard Nixon. Both Kroc and Disney advocated hard work and self-reliance.

Disney quickly developed clever and efficient marketing strategies—such as procuring corporate sponsorship, creating an atmosphere in which visitors felt as though they had escaped the real world, and coining the “synergy” strategy, which sold the rights to use Disney characters to other companies, thus increasing product recognition.

Similarly, Ray Kroc worked on his own marketing strategies—telling people he was really in show business, not the restaurant business. For example, Ronald McDonald was inspired by Bozo the Clown. Soon Ronald began to rival Mickey in name recognition. McDonald's Corporation created more characters and added “playlands” to their restaurants.

For the complete study guide: <http://monkeynote.stores.yahoo.net/>

In the final sections of Chapter 2, Schlosser discusses marketing strategies aimed at children—an industry which exploded in the 1980s. Marketing to children has become an art—aimed at urging children to persuade their guardians in specific ways as well as developing customers for life. This marketing extends well beyond television ad campaigns and includes playlands, toys, and cross-promotion. McDonald's has gone so far as to promote itself as a "Trusted Friend," suggesting that it cares about its customers' well-being.

This chapter closes with attention to how fast food has become incorporated in many public schools. Fast-food companies pay to advertise in schools, while soda companies sell their product in schools. Schools badly in need of funding find themselves in a difficult position of concern for their students' health and concern for their students' educational needs.

Notes

In this chapter, Schlosser shows a different side of the fast-food pioneer. In comparing the rise of McDonald's with the Walt Disney Company, Schlosser is able to depict Ray Kroc as a shrewd businessman concerned primarily, if not solely, with expanding his empire. This tale serves as a backdrop for Schlosser's real project—which is to illuminate the machination of the contemporary fast-food nation. Schlosser effectively demonstrates how fast-food companies, which offer little in terms of nutrition, manipulate young minds in an effort to sell their products. These companies go so far as to portray themselves as trusted friends and prey on school systems with declining revenue.

One should be careful to consider the sense of agency Schlosser allots (or withholds from) the American consumer. While fast-food companies actively market their product to impressionable minds, parents are the ultimate decision-makers for their children. Moreover, there is a class-element at stake in fast-food consumption. Often low-wage workers, relegated to kitchen-less hotel rooms have limited food options. For more on the relationship between low-wage workers and the fast-food industry see Barbara Ehrenreich's *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By In America* (2001).

Finally, since this book's publication many school districts have begun to take responsibility for their students' health in an effort to curb childhood obesity.....

IMPORTANT / KEY FACTS SUMMARY

Title: *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*

Author: Eric Schlosser

Date Published: 2001

Genre: Non-Fiction

Setting: During the course of this investigation, Schlosser primarily explores the history and culture of Southern California; Colorado Springs, CO; Pueblo, CO; Northern, NJ; Greeley, CO;.....

Memorable Quotes

"The harder you work, the luckier you become." Carl Karcher's father gave him this advice when he was a child (p 13).

For the complete study guide: <http://monkeynote.stores.yahoo.net/>

“If they were drowning to death, I would put a hose in their mouth.” Ray Kroc says this of the Walt Disney Company as their fortunes declined in the 1960s (p41).

Memorable Quotes Quiz

Match the quote (numbered) with the attribution (lettered)

1. “Nature isn’t an abstraction for me. My family lives with it every day.”
2. “This recent outbreak sheds light on a nationwide problem: inconsistent information about proper cooking temperatures”

Study Questions

Multiple Choice

1. Congress passed the Interstate Highway Act under which President:
A. Truman
B. Eisenhower
C. Kennedy
2. What provided a set back for fast-food restaurant in 1973?
A. The Arab Oil Embargo
B. The Supreme Court’s ruling in *Roe v. Wade*
The Vietnam War.....

Answer Key

1. B 2. A 3. C 4. A 5. A 6. C 7. B 8. B 9. B 10. C 11. A 12. B 13. A 14. C 15. B

Essay Questions

Topics for Class Discussion/ In-Class Writing

Chapter 1

1. How would you describe Schlosser’s tone in this first chapter? Does he seem to have an opinion about “the founding fathers” or an image of this period he wishes to convey?
2. What were some other important changes that happened in America following World War II? How might these changes contextualize the rise of the fast-food restaurant?

Chapter 2

1. Do you think Schlosser renders a fair depiction of Ray Kroc and Walt Disney in this chapter? Do you think companies such as McDonald’s are responsible for the growing problem of childhood obesity in America, or do you think it is primarily parents’ responsibility?....

Copyright ©2006 TheBestNotes.com.

Reprinted with permission of TheBestNotes.com. All Rights Reserved.

Distribution without the written consent of TheBestNotes.com is strictly prohibited.

END OF SAMPLE MONKEYNOTES EXCERPTS

For the complete study guide, visit:

<http://monkeynote.stores.yahoo.net/>