

PARAGRAPH ASSIGNMENTS

1. In her essay, Walker is critical of the glamorous, healthy image presented by cigarette advertisements. Write a paragraph in which you describe what you think an honest cigarette advertisement would look like. Who would appear in the ad? What would they be doing? What would they be saying?

In preparation for this assignment, you might study two or three cigarette ads, using them as inspiration. Your topic sentence might be something like this: "A truly honest cigarette advertisement would not tempt anyone to smoke."

2. Write a paragraph in which you try to persuade a friend to quit smoking. In it, explain in detail three reasons you think he or she should quit. Use transitions such as *first of all*, *secondly*, *another*, and *finally* as you list the three reasons.

ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS

1. Think of three bad habits that you have. Perhaps you spend money impulsively, put things off until the last minute, eat too much junk food, speak before you think, or bite your nails. Write an essay explaining how you believe you acquired the habits, how you think they harm you, and how you could get rid of them. Here is a possible thesis statement for this essay: "There are several bad habits that I would love to break."
2. According to Walker, a viewer of movies from the 1940s and 1950s would get the idea that people could "smoke like chimneys" with no bad effects. What are some unrealistic images that today's movies and TV shows present? To answer that question, write an essay from the point of view of an alien from another planet. In order to learn more about the human race, you, the alien, are watching today's movies and TV shows. Write about at least three unrealistic—or just plain wrong—ideas that today's films and television teach you about human beings and society. Use specific examples from movies and TV shows to illustrate your points. Here are a few sample topic sentences for supporting paragraphs in this essay:
 - "Humans sustain themselves with bubbly drinks and messy food combinations."
 - "Humans play a wide variety of puzzling games."
 - "Young and mature humans speak somewhat different languages."

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Here's to Your Health

Joan Dunayer

Preview

"It doesn't get any better than this." "Here's to good friends." "Good times never felt so good." According to its advertising slogans, alcohol makes life better. But does it? In this piece, Joan Dunayer looks behind the attractive advertisements to find an ugly reality.

Words to Watch

tequila (1): a strong liquor made from a Mexican plant
segment (2): part
defy (2): to challenge
voluntary (2): not required; done by choice
myth (3): a false belief
illusion (8): false impression
irony (12): a meaning that is the opposite of what is actually said

As the only freshman on his high school's varsity wrestling team, Tod was anxious to fit in with his older teammates. One night after a match, he was offered a tequila¹ bottle on the ride home. Tod felt he had to accept, or he would seem like a sissy. He took a swallow, and every time the bottle was passed back to him, he took another swallow. After seven swallows, he passed out. His terrified teammates carried him into his

home, and his mother then rushed him to the hospital. After his stomach was pumped, Tod learned that his blood alcohol level had been so high that he was lucky not to be in a coma or dead.

Unfortunately, drinking is not unusual among high-school students or, for that matter, in any other segment² of our society. And that's no accident. There are numerous influences in our society urging people to drink, not the least of which is advertising. Who can recall a televised baseball or basketball game without a beer commercial? Furthermore, alcohol ads appear with pounding frequency in magazines, on billboards, and in college newspapers. According to industry estimates, brewers spend more than \$600 million a year on radio and TV commercials and another \$90 million on print ads. In addition, the liquor industry spends about \$230 million a year on print advertising. And recently, Joseph E. Seagram & Sons, Inc. decided to defy³ the liquor industry's voluntary⁴ ban on radio and TV ads for hard liquor. The company began running commercials for its Crown Royal Canadian Whiskey on a Texas TV station.

To top it all off, this aggressive advertising of alcohol promotes a harmful myth⁵ about drinking.

Part of the myth is that liquor signals professional success. In a slick men's magazine, one full-page ad for Scotch whiskey shows two men seated in an elegant restaurant. Both are in their thirties, perfectly groomed, and wearing expensive-looking gray suits. The windows are draped with velvet, the table with spotless white linen. Each place-setting consists of a long-stemmed water goblet, silver utensils, and thick silver plates. On each plate is a half-empty cocktail glass. The two men are grinning and shaking hands, as if they've just concluded a business deal. The caption reads, "The taste of success."

Contrary to what the liquor company would have us believe, drinking is more closely related to lack of success than to achievement. Among students, the heaviest drinkers have the lowest grades. In the work force, alcoholics are frequently late or absent, tend to perform poorly, and often get fired. Although alcohol abuse occurs in all economic classes, it remains most prevalent among the poor.

Another part of the alcohol myth is that drinking makes you more attractive to the opposite sex. "Hot, hot, hot," one commercial's soundtrack begins, as the camera scans a crowd of college-age beachgoers. Next it follows the curve of a woman's leg up to her bare hip and fingers there. She is young, beautiful, wearing a bikini. A young guy, carrying an ice chest, positions himself near to where she sits. He is tan, muscular. She doesn't show much interest—until he opens the chest and takes out a beer. Now she smiles over at him. He raises his eyebrows and, invitingly, holds up another can. She joins him. This beer, the song concludes, "attracts like no other"

Beer doesn't make anyone sexier. Like all alcohol, it lowers the levels of male hormones in men and of female hormones in women—even when taken in small amounts. In substantial amounts, alcohol can cause infertility in women and impotence in men. Some alcoholic men even develop enlarged breasts, from their increased female hormones.

The alcohol myth also creates the illusion⁶ that beer and athletics are a perfect combination. One billboard features three high-action images: a basketball player running at top speed, a surfer riding a wave, and a basketball player leaping to make a dunk shot. A particular light beer, the billboard promises, "won't slow you down."

"Slow you down" is exactly what alcohol does. Drinking plays a role in over six million injuries each year—not counting automobile accidents. Even in small amounts, alcohol dulls the brain, reducing muscle coordination and slowing reaction time. It also interferes with the ability to focus the eyes and adjust to a sudden change in brightness—such as the flash of a car's headlights. Drinking and driving, responsible for over half of all automobile deaths, is the leading cause of death among teenagers. Continued alcohol abuse can physically change the brain, permanently impairing learning and memory. Long-term drinking is related to malnutrition, weakening of the bones, and ulcers. It increases the risk of liver failure, heart disease, and stomach cancer.

Finally, according to the myth, alcohol generates a warm glow of happiness that unifies the family. In one popular film, the only food visible at a wedding reception is an untouched wedding cake, but beer, whiskey, and vodka flow freely. Most of the guests are drunk. After shouting into the microphone to get everyone's attention, the band leader asks the bride and groom to come forward. They are presented with two wine-filled silver drinking cups branching out from a single stem. "If you can drink your cups without spilling any wine," the band leader tells them, "you will have good luck for the rest of your lives." The couple drain their cups without taking a breath, and the crowd cheers.

A marriage, however, is unlikely to be "lucky" if alcohol plays a major role in it. Nearly two-thirds of domestic violence involves drinking. Alcohol abuse by parents is strongly tied to child neglect and juvenile delinquency. Drinking during pregnancy can lead to miscarriage and is a major cause of such birth defects as deformed limbs and mental retardation. Those who depend on alcohol are far from happy: over a fourth of the patients in state and county mental institutions have alcohol problems; more than half of all violent crimes are alcohol-related; the rate of suicide among alcoholics is fifteen times higher than among the general population.

Advertisers would have us believe the myth that alcohol is part of being successful, sexy, healthy, and happy, but those who have suffered

from it—directly or indirectly—know otherwise. For alcohol's victims, "Here's to your health" rings with a terrible irony^o when it is accompanied by the clink of liquor glasses.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Freewrite for ten minutes on one of the following.

1. Did you enjoy reading this selection? Why or why not?
2. Do you agree that movies, TV shows, and advertising present alcohol in a deceptively positive light? Can you think of any that show the harm alcohol can do?
3. Do you know anyone who has had a negative experience because of alcohol use? What happened to that person? Did he or she continue to use alcohol following the incident? How did that person's experience affect your thinking about alcohol?

VOCABULARY CHECK

A. Circle the letter of the word or phrase that best completes each of the following four items.

1. In the sentence below, the word *prevalent* means
 - a. weak.
 - b. colorful.
 - c. widespread.
 - d. inexpensive.

"Although alcohol abuse occurs in all economic classes, it remains most prevalent among the poor." (Paragraph 5)
2. In the sentences below, the word *substantial* means
 - a. large.
 - b. reasonable.
 - c. weak.
 - d. pleasing.

"Beer... lowers the levels of male hormones in men and of female hormones in women—even when taken in small amounts. In substantial amounts, alcohol can cause infertility in women and impotence in men." (Paragraph 7)

3. In the sentence below, the word *impairing* means
 - a. damaging.
 - b. doubling.
 - c. postponing.
 - d. teaching.

"Continued alcohol abuse can physically change the brain, permanently impairing learning and memory." (Paragraph 9)

4. In the sentence below, the word *generates* means
 - a. removes.
 - b. hides.
 - c. produces.
 - d. follows.

"Finally, according to the myth, alcohol generates a warm glow of happiness that unites the family." (Paragraph 10)

B. Circle the letter of the answer that best completes each of the following four items. Each item uses a word (or form of a word) from "Words to Watch."

5. An example of a *segment* of the population is
 - a. a survey of the population.
 - b. African American males between the ages of 17–25.
 - c. the population as a whole.
6. The beautiful princess *defied* the terrifying dragon by
 - a. crying out, "Oh, I am so frightened! Where is a handsome prince to save me?"
 - b. offering him the king and queen to eat if he would spare her life.
 - c. shouting, "I'm not afraid of you, garbage breath! Get out here and fight!"
7. It is *voluntary* to pay
 - a. taxes.
 - b. for a friend's dinner.
 - c. a parking ticket.
8. Lucinda's belief that Victor really loved her was an *illusion*; Victor
 - a. soon married her, was a wonderful husband, and they lived happily ever after.
 - b. soon revealed that he was a con man interested only in her money.
 - c. loved her dearly, although circumstances made it impossible for them to be together.

READING CHECK

Central Point and Main Ideas

1. Which sentence best expresses the central point of the entire selection?
 - a. Advertising promotes the idea that alcohol makes people sexy, successful, and happy.
 - b. Advertisers spend a lot of money to promote false ideas about alcohol.
 - c. Advertisers should be more careful to tell the truth, as young people are easily influenced by ads.
 - d. Like the freshman on the wrestling team, teenagers often engage in foolish behavior to win the acceptance of their friends.
2. The topic sentence of paragraph 2 is its
 - a. first sentence.
 - b. second sentence.
 - c. third sentence.
 - d. last sentence.
3. Which sentence best expresses the idea of paragraph 5?
 - a. Students who drink heavily tend to make low grades.
 - b. Drinking and lack of success often go hand in hand.
 - c. A large percentage of heavy drinkers are poor.
 - d. Employees who drink heavily are often fired from their jobs.
4. What is the total amount that brewers spend per year on TV, radio, and print ads?
 - a. \$60 million
 - b. \$90 million
 - c. \$690 million
 - d. \$900 million
5. Which of the following is *not* listed in paragraph 9 as a physical risk of long-term drinking?
 - a. Heart disease
 - b. Lung cancer
 - c. Malnutrition
 - d. Liver failure

Key Supporting Details

6. According to paragraph 11, what percentage of violent crimes are alcohol-related?
 - a. 25 percent
 - b. Nearly 50 percent
 - c. Over 50 percent
 - d. 75 percent
7. Which of the following problems that affect children is linked to alcohol abuse by their parents?
 - a. Juvenile delinquency
 - b. Child neglect
 - c. Birth defects
 - d. All of the above

Inferences

8. We can logically infer that Tod
 - a. had been an alcohol abuser for some time prior to the incident mentioned in this story.
 - b. did not realize how powerful tequila was.
 - c. suffered permanent brain damage as a result of his tequila overdose.
 - d. was suspended from the wrestling team.
9. _____ TRUE OR FALSE? We can conclude that the author believes light beer is not harmful.

The Writer's Craft

10. The beginning of the article is best described by which of the following statements?
 - a. It is a personal anecdote—or brief story—about how the author herself has been affected by alcohol advertising.
 - b. It is a series of questions about alcohol advertising and its effects.
 - c. It is an anecdote that illustrates how a teenager accepted the myth about alcohol use.
 - d. It is a scenario about happy, successful alcohol users—in other words, an idea that is the opposite of the one the essay will develop.