

Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal
Eric Schlosser

Study Guide

You should do well on the test if you can answer the following questions. Remember, this is a guide and is not intended to be an advance copy of the questions the test.

- **Introduction**
 - How does the amount spent on fast food compare with the amount spent on other products and services in our society?
 - Why is fast food worth studying?
 - What are some of the observations about McDonald's made by the author?
 - Why did Schlosser choose Boulder, CO as his setting?
 - What does the author say about independent farmers?
 - What does the author say about the political clout of the meat packing industry?
 - According to the author, why did he write this book?
- **Chapter 1, "The Founding Fathers"**
 - What restaurant chain did Carl Karcher start?
 - Why did General Motors want to buy trolley systems throughout the U.S.?
 - What was the "Speedee Service System" and how was it different from what other fast food restaurants were doing?
 - What were some of the characteristics of the men who started the fast food industry?
 - Who are the "Founding Fathers" of the fast food industry and how did each one get started in the industry?
 - What were some of the other fast food restaurants that were inspired by McDonald's approach to food service?
 - How does Schlosser create a disturbing view of the McDonald's chain and its power in the United States?
- **Chapter 2, "Your Trusted Friends"**
 - What are some of the parallels between Ray Kroc and Walt Disney?
 - How does the author describe Walt Disney and Ray Kroc's involvement in politics?
 - What is synergy in marketing and what are some of the ways that fast food companies practice synergy? Who first integrated synergy into his company?
 - Why, in the 1980s, did companies start marketing to kids and what were some of the ways in which they did this?
 - How successful have efforts been to limit advertising aimed at children? What does the author say about marketing fast food products in the schools?
 - How does Schlosser believe that on-campus advertisements have effected students and the curriculum in schools?
- **Chapter 3, "Behind the Counter"**
 - In what ways is Colorado Springs today much like southern California?
 - What new businesses have moved into Colorado Springs in recent years?

- What type of business is the largest private employer in the state of Colorado?
- How does McDonald's decide where to build new restaurants?
- Why are so many fast food employees teenagers?
- What is "throughput?" Where did the term come from and how does it apply to the fast food industry?
- What is meant by "McDonald's English?"
- Why do fast food restaurants invest so much time and money in automating their restaurants?
- What is the average job turnover rate in the fast food industry?
- How has the "real value" of wages at fast food restaurants changed over time?
- How has the fast food industry responded to efforts to unionize its workers?
- How many workers at McDonald's in North America are unionized?
- What are the benefits and costs of having teenagers work after school?
- What is the impact of the Fair Labor Standards Act and of Colorado state law on the hours that kids in Colorado Springs work at fast food restaurants?
- What contributes the most to whether or not working at a fast food restaurant is an enjoyable experience?
- What does the author say about robbery and murder in fast food restaurants? How does he think that violence at fast food restaurants might be reduced?
- Who is often responsible for committing robberies of fast food restaurants?
- How has the fast food industry responded to efforts by OSHA to reduce workplace violence?
- **Chapter 4, "Success"**
 - What was different about the way McDonald's franchised businesses?
 - How does the cost of a McDonald's franchise compare with the cost of a franchise from other fast food chains?
 - How does the failure rate of franchises in general compare with that of other businesses?
 - Among franchises what is "encroachment?"
 - What are some of the disadvantages of running a franchise?
 - What fast food chain is considered the worst in its treatment of franchisees?
- **Chapter 5, "Why the Fries Taste Good"**
 - What connection does J. R. Simplot have to the fast food industry? How have the potato farms in Idaho changed in the last 25 years or so?
 - What is PGI and how successful has it been at organizing potato farmers?
 - What is the "fallacy of composition?"
 - What makes McDonald's french fries taste different from the fries of other fast food restaurants?
 - What are some of the similarities and some of the differences between "artificial flavors" and "natural flavors?"
 - How do fast food corporations maintain consistency in the flavor of their products?
- **Chapter 6, "On the Range"**
 - What are some of the problems facing cattle ranchers?
 - What impact has the consolidation of the meat packing industry had on cattle ranchers?

- What are "captive supplies" of cattle?
- What was the impact of the Chicken McNugget on the poultry industry?
- What are the conditions or terms of business under which most poultry farmers operate?
- How does the nutritional value of a McNugget compare with that of a hamburger?
- Why would small independent cattle ranchers be afraid to speak out against the practices of large meat processors?
- Which type of cattle rancher is currently facing the greatest economic difficulty?
- How does the suicide rate for ranchers and farmers compare with the rate for U.S. citizens in general?
- **Chapter 7, "Cogs in the Great Machine"**
 - What effect did the publication of the book *The Jungle* in 1906 have on the meat packing industry?
 - What changes did IBP introduce to the meat packing industry?
 - Why were newer meat packing plants located in rural areas rather than in cities?
 - What were the links between IBP and organized crime?
 - What has been the relationship between labor unions and modern meat packing plants?
 - How do wages in meat packing plants today compare with wages in the early 1900s, after the workers became unionized?
 - How high is the employee turnover rate in the meat packing industry and why don't the meat packing plants see this as a problem?
 - Where do meat packing companies go to recruit new employees?
 - How does Schlosser describe the ways migrant meat-packing workers are affecting the communities in which they live?
 - Why do meat-packing plants often tend to close down in one community and open a new facility elsewhere?
- **Chapter 8, "The Most Dangerous Job"**
 - How does the injury rate in meat packing compare with the injury rate in other occupations?
 - What kinds of injuries do workers in meatpacking plants typically suffer?
 - What is the impact on workers due to speeding up the line in meatpacking plants?
 - Why don't more workers complain about safety conditions in the plants?
 - What role do supervisors play in the reporting of workplace injuries in meat processing plants?
 - How does the author describe the most dangerous type of work in these plants performed by the late-night cleaning crews and what kinds of injuries do these workers risk?
 - What has been the impact of allowing plants to maintain their own injury logs?
 - How has the authority of OSHA changed over time?
 - What was the original purpose of workers' compensation laws? From a worker's point of view, what are some of the problems with Colorado's workers' comp law?
 - What does the author think about claims that meatpacking plants have a great deal of concern about the health and well-being of their workers?

- **Chapter 9, "What's in the Meat"**
 - Compared with several decades ago, how common are food-related illnesses today?
 - How has the centralization of food production influenced the spread of food-related illnesses?
 - What authority does the U.S. Government have to demand the recall of tainted meat?
 - How are E. coli 0157: H-7 and other contaminants spread in meat products?
 - What was the first national hamburger chain and what did it do to try to change the image of the hamburger?
 - What are the effects of E. coli 0157:H7 on the human body?
 - What are some of the ways people can be infected with E. coli 0157:H7?
 - What is fed to cattle that might facilitate the spread of pathogens?
 - How does the risk of contamination for ground beef compare with the risk of contamination of whole cuts of beef?
 - Why is the author concerned about the use of older dairy cattle to make ground beef?
 - How has the meatpacking industry generally responded to health concerns about the nation's beef?
 - What was the Streamlined Inspection System launched by the USDA?
 - How did Presidents Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, and Bill Clinton respond to the issues within the meatpacking industry?
 - How did the Jack in the Box restaurant chain respond to its outbreak of salmonella?
 - How does Schlosser describe the current recall system for tainted meat? What can the USDA do if it discovers that a meat-packing facility is not following the health code?
 - What are the advantages and disadvantages of irradiating meat?
 - What kind of meat is selected for consumption in public schools?
- **Chapter 10, "Global Realization"**
 - Why did the author visit Plauen, Germany?
 - What are some of the consequences of opening McDonald's in Germany?
 - In a discussion of fast food corporations, why is it important to talk about their overseas operations?
 - In foreign countries, what group does most fast food advertising target?
 - In what ways might there be a connection between the obesity rate in America and the fast food industry? Why has it been a challenge to defeat the epidemic? Why is obesity a problem for American society as a whole?
 - What kind of business is the most frequent target of anti-American protests in foreign countries and what kinds of groups engage in these protests?
 - What did London Greenpeace do to protest McDonald's and what was McDonald's response?
- **Epilogue, "Have It Your Way"**
 - In what ways are restaurants like Conway's Red Top and In-N-Out different from McDonald's and most other fast food chains?

- What does the author think should be done about advertising unhealthy foods to children?
- What does the author say about the safety of the U.S. food supply compared with that of other countries?
- What does Schlosser think Congress should do about food safety and about working conditions in meatpacking companies?
- What can consumers do to change food safety and working conditions in the fast food industry?