

Vinyl 2010 Essay Competition Submission Template

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Summary:

One of the alarming characteristics of today's world is the food and energy crisis. The Western approach, which has great impact on the entire world, turns out to have many negative consequences. However, a new way of thinking, combined with political will and technological advances, could direct the society to a future where environmentally friendly solutions and people's comfort would be not only a distant vision, but become the reality. As a politically influential society, we are responsible for rethinking our values, levels of consumption, and an effective cooperation with those in need, which would, in the end, benefit everyone.

Essay:

Faced With a Food and Energy Crisis, How Can Society Improve Its Well-Being?

Our planet is the home of billions of incredible and smart beings. They know what to do, are content with what they have, and understand the natural cycle of growth and decline. Humans can be also described as intelligent. In some cultures, they are more connected to nature and view everyday work as the destination rather than the road that leads to it. In other societies, however, hard work is only appreciated when it attempts to achieve a higher objective. With passage of time, people want to grow, but not all forms of growth advance the common good.

At the beginning of the 21st century, we are facing major problems, making us wonder how come we are so interested in the composition of stardust and less touched by the face of a starving person. The problem of both food and energy seems to be more of an issue of ineffective distribution and consumption rather than actual lack. Our society needs to start looking more seriously for a way out of the present state.

According to the United Nations World Food Programme, the amount of food produced worldwide is sufficient to feed the world's population. Food distribution has become a political matter in places where self-sufficiency becomes impossible for the majority of people due to unfavorable farming conditions. In some of these countries, governments are either corrupt or fail to provide its people with solutions. But food transportation and consumption raises questions in the so-called Global North, too. Food is something people should thrive on and not just wither on hamburgers and ice-cream, especially considering that nearly one billion people worldwide suffer from chronic hunger. Thoughtful eating habits can help solve both energy and food problems. For example, eating locally and lower on the food chain is much more energy-efficient than following a meat-based diet, high in food miles. Growing your own crops in permaculture community gardens cuts down the energy costs and helps build a stronger sense of sharing with the nature and other people. Conventional agricultural food production and distribution by corporate businesses often means disrespecting natural production cycles and methods, undervaluing human labor, and forcing farmers into undesirable agreements. For the consumers, these policies are often invisible and contradict the convenience of having cheap produce available for purchase all year long. This technological and profit-oriented approach should be replaced with a more human- and

nature-oriented approach, which would guarantee fair prices for the farmers and provide them with better support, as well as lower the use of chemicals to help preserve the environment. The price we pay for food should reflect the impact its production has on the environment. Cheap food may seem convenient, but it does not make us value food for what it is – a medium between the nature and the body, a key factor for the quality of life. In the Western society, we should learn the true costs of food production and see what the food is really worth. With thoughtful distribution, many problems in this alarming cause can be solved. Food is not only a matter of survival, but the source of life in the greatest possible sense.

Rethinking our views on food, it is easy to see that the roots of energy crisis are somewhat similar. If we accept the fact that energy is not produced and consumed, but can only be transformed from one form to another, we realize that we all must share it. Massive energy use in some parts of the world means its lack somewhere else, which is a key point for further study. Reducing the amount of energy used by the people in wealthy countries can significantly contribute to the solution and could also help settle oil-related international conflicts. The money invested into the effort to gain control over the world's oil reserves could be used to develop improved uses of alternative energy sources. Two of the most energy-demanding issues are animal-related food production and transportation. On top of using energy-efficient freight transportation, saving energy for individual travel can turn out to be positive in a number of different ways, too. Besides alleviating traffic jams, bicycling and walking are means of physical exercise, and the use of public transportation provides an occasion for social contacts, reading, and other useful and pleasant activities. Exploring the beauty of sharing is not only personally enriching, but also environmentally friendly. Living with other people is usually more efficient than living alone; sharing appliances, cars, bicycles and other items that are not used daily; being able to buy less thanks to the convenience of co-ownership; reusing and repairing when possible and recycling or donating things we do not use any more, those are just examples of many possible ways that can help reduce energy use and benefit people.

In Chinese, the word 'crisis' also means 'opportunity'. Let us view the current crisis as a chance to improve the state of environment and the relationships between people in general. After all, everything is connected, and prudent dealing with difficult food and energy issues has the potential to benefit not only nature, but society as well.