Can a Green Thumb Save the Planet?

Kyle Madsen

Introduction

Environmental journalist Michael Pollan in his article "Why Bother?" for the *New York Times Magazine* examines why working to slow the threat of climate change is such a daunting task.

Thesis

Although Pollan has created an argument with strong logical, ethical, and emotional appeals, his very dominant angle of vision—seen in his assumptions, alarmist language, and exclusive focus on garden-growing—may fail to win neutral readers. I also think Pollan's argument loses impact by not discussing more realistic alternatives such as pursing smart consumerism and better environmental education for children.

Summary

In "Why Bother?" Michael Pollan explores how we have arrived at our current climate change crisis and argues why and how we should try to change our individual actions.

Topic Sentences

Pollan builds a forceful case in his well-argued and knowledgeable interpretation of our climate-change problem as a "crisis of lifestyle—of character, even" (90).

Another strength of Pollan's argument is the way he builds bridges to his audience through his appeals to *pathos*.

However, despite his outreach to readers, Pollan's angle of vision may be too dominant and intense for some readers.

In addition, after appearing very in tune with readers in the first part of his argument, in the final part he does not address his readers' practical concerns.

Also, besides gardens, I think Pollan could emphasize other avenues of change such as sustainable consumerism.

Besides sustainable consumerism, I think we should emphasize the promotion of better environmental education for our children.

Conclusion

While Pollan is correct in pushing us into action now, asking Americans to grow a garden, when changing a light bulb seems daunting, is an unrealistic and limited approach. However, Pollan persuasively addresses the underlying issues in our attitudes toward the climate crisis and works to empower readers to become responsible and involved. Whether it be through gardening, supporting green business, or education, I agree with Pollan that the important thing is that you learn to bother for yourself.

Questioning Thomas L. Friedman's Optimism in "30 Little Turtles"

Stephanie Malinowski

Introduction / Summary

In "30 Little Turtles," an op-ed piece that appeared in the *New York Times* on February 29, 2004, journalist and foreign affairs columnist Thomas L. Friedman argues that outsourcing call center jobs from the Western world to India is transforming the lives of Indian workers and benefiting geopolitics.

Thesis

Although Friedman's article clearly conveys to its audience how some Indian workers are benefiting from outsourcing, his argument relies heavily on personal experience and generalizations. I also think his condescending attitude hurts his argument, and he concludes his article too abruptly, leaving readers with questions.

Topic Sentences

Friedman succeeds in portraying the positive side of outsourcing to his *New York Times* readers who may be questioning the rationale for outsourcing.

However, Friedman also makes large generalizations based on his few personal experiences, lessening the credibility of his article.

An even bigger problem with Friedman's article is the condescending way in which he describes the Indian workers.

I also think that Friedman weakens his article by concluding abruptly and introducing new ideas to readers that leave them with unanswered questions.

Conclusion

Giving a human face to outsourcing is a good idea; however; Friedman does not support his main argument well, and this article comes across as a simplistic, unexplored view of outsourcing. I and other readers are left needing to look for answers to serious questions about outsourcing elsewhere.