

UPTON SINCLAIR AND THE SOCIAL NOVEL

When it was first published as a book in 1906, *The Jungle's* graphic revelations about the American meatpacking industry, combined with its compelling story of an immigrant worker's brutal degradation, made it an immediate sensation. Upton Sinclair's working-class readers may have appreciated his point, but the primary response of middle-class readers of *The Jungle* was not continued political sympathy for immigrants or unity with the working class. Rather, they were shocked and appalled by what might be in their food. The novel's tales of rat feces ground up in sausages, gangrenous cattle butchered and sold, preservatives and dyes used to disguise malodorous decomposition in tinned meat cans prompted a general outcry. "I aimed at the public's heart," Sinclair remarked, "and by accident hit the stomach." Domestic meat consumption fell, and Europeans—their disgust fanned by their own meat producers—promptly stopped consuming American meat. With sales plummeting and fear rising that the supporters of nationalization of the meatpacking industry might gain from the scandal, American packing companies and the government felt compelled and quickly passed the Pure Food and Drug and Meat Inspection Acts of 1906. These measures inspired by *The Jungle*, did not address conditions for workers at the point of production. Reform, not revolution, was the novel's consequences.

Answer the following questions using at least one complete sentence.

- 1) What was Sinclair's purpose in writing *The Jungle*?
- 2) What did Sinclair consider *The Jungle* to be?
- 3) What was the government's response to the book?



IS IT STILL TRUE TODAY?

Eight years after publishing *The Jungle* Sinclair wrote, "So far as concerns the conditions of the workers, men, women, and children in this industrial inferno, nothing has been done, and nobody cares whether anything has been done or not."

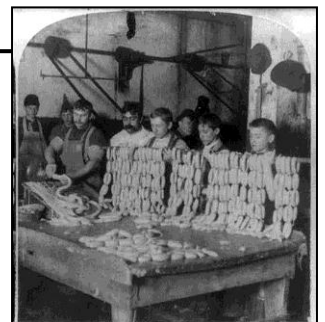
Since Sinclair's death in 1968, many of the old problems have reasserted themselves. Despite our instinctive belief in "progress" and our deeply ingrained tendency to imagine that the worst conditions of industrialism belong forever to the nineteenth century, meatpacking has again become a jungle. A massive restructuring of the industry in the 1960's and 1970's, aided by extensive deregulation under President Reagan in the 1980's, resulted in the relocation of production to remote rural locations, mainly in the South and Midwest. The packinghouse union's strength was broken, and the back of the yard's community was destroyed. The result on the shop floor was speedup, systematic de-skilling, and a gruesome atmosphere to match that described in *The Jungle*. Lines now process 350 heads of cattle per hour, a rate faster than Sinclair witnessed. Meatpacking has become the most dangerous job in the country, with workers suffering from high rates of laceration, disabling injury and illness.

Speedup in meatpacking is responsible for the increased evidence of *E. coli*, salmonella, and other food-borne diseases that according to Eric Schlosser in his best selling book *Fast Food Nation*, have resulted in giant feedlots where cattle are concentrated in filth prior to processing, entering meat when fecal matter and stomach contents splatter during production (splattering more frequently at high line speeds).

Meatpacking is now dominated by enormous firms. The top four meatpacking companies now slaughter 85% of the nation's cattle, in dramatic contrast to 21% slaughtered by the top four in 1970. The meatpacking industry is considerably like it was in 1906: poorly regulated, hostile to unions, dangerous to workers, and ruled by giants.

Please answer the following questions using at least one complete sentence.

- 1) What specifically did deregulation up until the 1980's do to the meatpacking industry?
- 2) How has the meatpacking industry become a "jungle" once again?
- 3) What are the negative consequences of speeding up the line of production?
- 4) (Opinion)—Should the government do anything about the meatpacking industry in its current state? Why or why not?



CAUSE AND EFFECT 1 – PROGRESSIVE ERA

CAUSE	EFFECT
BECAUSE. [The Jungle was published,	Readers found out what could possibly be in their meat
BECAUSE.	
BECAUSE.	

CAUSE AND EFFECT 2 – MODERN DAY

CAUSE	EFFECT
BECAUSE.	
BECAUSE.	
BECAUSE.	

FAST FOOD NATION – WHY MCDONALD'S FRIES TASTE SO GOOD

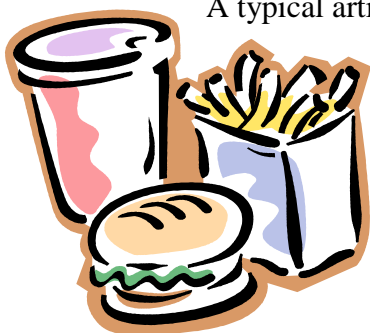


The taste of McDonald's French fries played a crucial role in the chain's success—fries are much more profitable than hamburgers—and was long praised by customers, competitors, and even food critics. James Beard loved McDonald's fries. Their distinctive taste does not stem from the kind of potatoes that McDonald's buys, the technology that produces them, or the restaurant equipment that fries them: other chains use Russet Burbanks, buy their french fries from the same large processing companies, and have similar fryers in their restaurant kitchens. The taste of a french fry is largely determined by the cooking oil. For decades McDonald's cooked its french fries in a mixture of about seven percent cottonseed oil and 93 percent beef tallow. The mixture gave the fries their unique flavor—and more saturated beef fat per ounce than McDonald's hamburger.

In 1990, amid a barrage of criticism over the amount of cholesterol in its fries, McDonald's switched to pure vegetable oil. This presented the company with a challenge: how to make fries that subtly taste like beef without cooking them in beef tallow. A look at the ingredients in McDonald's french fries suggests how the problem was solved. Toward the end of the list is a seemingly innocuous yet oddly mysterious phrase: "natural flavor." That ingredient helps to explain not only why the fries taste so good, but also why most fast food—indeed, most of the food Americans eat today—taste the way it does.

Open your refrigerator, your freezer, your kitchen cupboards, and look at the labels on your food. You'll find "natural flavor" or "artificial flavor" in just about every list of ingredients. The similarities between these two broad categories are far more significant than the differences. Both are man-made additives that give most processed food most of its taste. People usually buy a food item because of its packaging or appearance. Taste usually determines whether they buy it again. About 90 percent of the money that Americans now spend on food goes to buy processed food. The canning, freezing, and dehydrating techniques used in processing destroy most of food's flavor—and so a vast industry has arisen in the United States to make processed food palatable. Without this flavor industry today's fast food would not exist. The names of the leading American fast-food chains and their best-selling menu items have become embedded in our popular culture and famous worldwide. But few people can name the companies that manufacture fast food's taste.

The federal food and Drug Administration does not require companies to disclose the ingredients of their color or flavor additives so long as all the chemicals in them are considered by the agency to be GRAS ("generally recognized as safe"). This enables companies to maintain the secrecy of their formulas. It also hides the fact that flavor compounds often contain more ingredients than the foods to which they give taste. The phrase "artificial strawberry flavor" gives little hint of the chemical wizardry and manufacturing skill that can make highly processed food taste like strawberries.



A typical artificial strawberry flavor, like the kind found in a Burger King strawberry milk shake, contains the following ingredients: amyl acetate, amyl butyrate, amyl valerate, anethol, anisyl formate, benzyl acetate, benzyl isobutyrate, butyric acid, cinnamyl isobutyrate, cinnamyl valerate, cognac essential oil, diacetyl, dipropyl ketone, ethyl acetate, ethyl amyl ketone, ethyl butyrate, ethyl cinnamate, ethyl heptanoate, ethyl heptylate, ethyl lactate, ethyl methylphenylglycidate, ethyl nitrate, ethyl propionate, ethyl valerate, heliotropin, hydroxyphenyl-2-butanone (10 percent solution in alcohol), a-

ionone, isobutyl anthranilate, isobutyl butyrate, lemon essential oil, maltol, 4-methylacetophenone, methyl anthranilate, methylbenzoate, methyl cinnamate, methyl heptene carbonate, methyl naphthyl ketone, methyl salicylate, mint essential oil, neroli essential oil, nerolin, neryl isobutyrate, orris butter, phenethyl alcohol, rose, rum ether, g-undecalactone, vanillin, and solvent.

Although flavors usually arise from a mixture of many different volatile chemicals, often a single compound supplies the dominant aroma. Smelled alone, the chemical provides an unmistakable sense of the food. Ethyl-2-methyl buterate, for example, smells just like an apple. Many of today's highly processed foods offer a black palette: whatever chemicals are added to them will give them specific tastes. Adding methyl-2-pyridyl ketone makes something taste like popcorn. Adding ethyl-3-hydroxy butanoate makes it taste like marshmallow. The possibilities are now almost limitless. Without affecting appearance or nutritional value, processed foods could be made with aroma chemicals such as hexanal (the smell of freshly cut grass) or 3-methyl butanoic acid (the smell of body odor).



Grainger had brought a dozen small glass bottles from the lab. After he opened each bottle, I dipped a fragrance-testing filter into it—a long white strip of paper designed to absorb aroma chemicals without producing off notes. Before placing each strip in front of my nose, I closed my eyes. Then I inhaled deeply, and one food after another was conjured from the glass bottles. I smelled fresh cherries, clack olives, sautéed onions, and shrimp. Grainger's most remarkable creation took me by surprise. After closing my eyes, I suddenly smelled a grilled hamburger. The aroma was uncanny, almost miraculous—as if someone in the room were flipping burgers on a hot grill. But when I opened my eyes, I saw just a narrow strip of white paper and a flavorist with a grin.

Answer the following questions with at least one sentence.

1) What was it that McDonald's french fries were cooked in? What did they end up switching it to? Why?

2) What percentage of food do Americans buy that are processed? What does processed mean?

3) How many chemicals are used to obtain the artificial strawberry flavor? How many can you pronounce?

4) (Opinion—At least 4 sentences) Should our government require that fast food restaurants post what is in their food and how many calories each thing has? Why or why not?

Our government (should/should not) make fast food companies post what is in their food because _____

Cause and Effect 1 – Progressive Era

Cause	Effect
<i>[Because] Due to the publishing of <u>The Jungle</u>...</i>	<i>Readers found out what could possibly be in their meat</i>
<i>[Because] People found out what things could possible be in their meat...</i>	<i>It caused Americans to dramatically reduce the amount of meat they bought and caused Europeans not to import American meat</i>
<i>[Because] Less meat was being bought and sold</i>	<i>The US government tried to encourage faith in the meatpacking industry by passing both the Pure Food and Drug Act and the Meat Inspection Act of 1906.</i>

Cause and Effect 2 – Modern Day

Cause	Effect
<i>[Because] Due to the deregulation of the meatpacking industry from the 1960's-1980's...</i>	<i>Major companies consolidated, moved to rural parts of the country, like Colorado, and broke the workers' unions.</i>
<i>[Because] The meatpacking industry moved and was deregulated...</i>	<i>Companies increased line speed to above 350 cattle per hour, which has made it currently the most dangerous job in America.</i>
<i>[Because] Due to the line speed being so fast...</i>	<i>Fecal matter and stomach contents are splattered during production and frequently get into the food</i>
<i>[Because] Cow innards are ending up in the meat during the processing.</i>	<i>Food-borne illnesses have resulted in hundreds of deaths and continue to be a constant threat to the health of American citizens.</i>