

English Language and Composition
Reading Time: 15 minutes
Suggested writing time: 40 minutes
Assignment devised by Eileen Bach 2010
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Directions: The following prompt is based on the accompanying seven sources.

This question requires you to integrate a variety of sources into a coherent, well-written essay. *Refer to the sources to support your position; avoid mere paraphrasing or summary. Your argument should be central; the sources should support this argument.*

Remember to attribute both direct and indirect citations.

Introduction

Kermit the Frog is not the only one who realizes, “It’s not easy being green.” From green buildings to Ecovillages, movement is afoot for communities to embrace green practices. Despite the need for greater civic participation in sustainable environmental practices, we are slow to make the changes needed to protect the natural environment. What should become our first priority in adopting greener methods of living?

Assignment

Read the following sources (including any introductory information) carefully. Then in an essay that synthesizes at least three of the sources for support, advocate for the most beneficial green practice from those available to communities. This requires you to determine the relative worth of each practice noted here, although you are not required to discuss all sources.

Refer to the sources as Source A, Source B, etc.; titles are included for your convenience.

SOURCE A (Ecovillage)

SOURCE B (EarthCorps)

SOURCE C (Civic Ecology)

SOURCE D (Benefits Graph)

SOURCE E (School Gardens)

SOURCE F (Vegetable Oil Cars)

SOURCE G (Cultivating Failure)

Source A: Berea College Ecovillage

<http://www.berea.edu/sens/ecovillage/>

Guided by intertwined educational, environmental, and social goals, the Ecovillage is an ecologically-sustainable residential and learning complex designed to meet housing needs for student families, childcare for campus children, and provide a living/labor opportunity for students interested in sustainability.

The Ecovillage is first and foremost about education. It is an example of learning by doing. Residents and children learn valuable lessons in environmentally responsible living through everyday activities and shared experiences. Other components of the Ecovillage provide educational opportunities for the entire campus and beyond.

The complex includes 50 apartments, a state-of-the-art Child Development Laboratory, a Commons House, and a Sustainability and Environmental Studies (SENS) demonstration house. The Ecological Machine, wetlands, permaculture food forest, and individual gardens are other community features.

Rigorous performance goals for the Ecovillage include: reduction of energy use by 75%; reduction of per capita water use by 75%; treatment of sewage and wastewater on-site to swimmable quality, and recycling, reusing or composting at least 50% of waste. To accomplish these and other goals, the Ecovillage incorporates a wide range of "green design" elements including passive solar heating, photovoltaic panels and wind-powered electrical generators. On-site treatment of waste is accomplished through the Ecological Machine, which converts sewage to swimmable quality water, and through a composting toilet in the SENS house. Roof-top capture of rainwater contributes to landscape irrigation and production of fruits and vegetables.

Source B: EarthCorps

<http://www.earthcorps.org/corps-program.php>

EarthCorps' corps program is an intensive commitment to service, teamwork and personal growth. Young people from across the United States (ages 18-25) work with peers from around the world, learning skills in environmental restoration, cross-cultural communication and leadership.

EarthCorps program participants, called corps members, are part of a diverse team of young adults committed to making a positive change. Corps members spend 80% of their time in the field working on restoration projects. Environmental restoration is hard, physical work that takes place year-round in all kinds of weather conditions.

The other 20% of corps member time is spent in classes, workshops, and field training as part of EarthCorps' education program. Education sessions mirror the learning goals of the EarthCorps experience, focusing on 3 main skill areas: • environmental restoration--skills and science • ecology--local Pacific Northwest and international issues • leadership and community outreach.

Corps members also earn certifications in basic backcountry-focused First Aid, and completion certificates from our educational partners (such as Washington State University Extension).

Source C: Civic Ecology

<http://www.serapdx.com/project.php?category=6&project=126>

Civic Ecology Principles

Communities with a strong or burgeoning Civic Ecology all share several essential qualities, which can be translated into five principles. Specifically, Civic Ecology:

Employs a whole systems approach. Civic Ecology is the web of flows that animates community life. All great, enduring communities – whether rural farming villages, suburbs, urban neighborhoods, or institutions – have a refined array of locally-based systems that facilitate resource, economic, and social flows. Moreover, these flows cross sectors; that is, economic, ecological, and social systems are intertwined rather than set in opposition.

Focuses on place. The systems of flows must be focused within the community, and, to the greatest extent possible, must provide locally-produced energy, use local resources, enhance community economic multipliers, and draw upon social capital.

Requires a new social contract. Presently, paying taxes and voting in exchange for services are viewed as the defining factors of citizenship. Civic Ecology draws upon a community's social capital by requiring active civic engagement in the creation, management, and monitoring of community systems.

Matches needs and assets. A community's capacity to create a positive future is dependent on the assets and strengths it has developed over time. The whole systems approach seeks to understand problems in terms of their root causes and broader needs. Matching assets to needs is at the heart of creating community systems that will result in an enduring Civic Ecology.

Is dynamic. Communities are continuously-evolving organisms. Because of this, Civic Ecology must be designed as a "learning ecology," – a web of systems that adapts based on knowledge gained through constant vigilance and monitoring.

Civic Ecology Benefits

Communities that have and continue to nurture their Civic Ecology enjoy five essential benefits:

A high degree of control over their assets and future by virtue of the fact that they themselves create both a community vision and the systems necessary to implement, and chart progress toward, that vision. That these systems rely largely on locally-based resources enhances community ownership and control.

Enduring wealth. Because Civic Ecology integrates systems flows across sectors, it is possible for a community to realize the multiple benefits of ecological, economic, and social wealth. The common alternative pits the economic, ecological, and social camps in "zero-sum game" opposition, resulting in economic growth at the expense of ecological and social impoverishment.

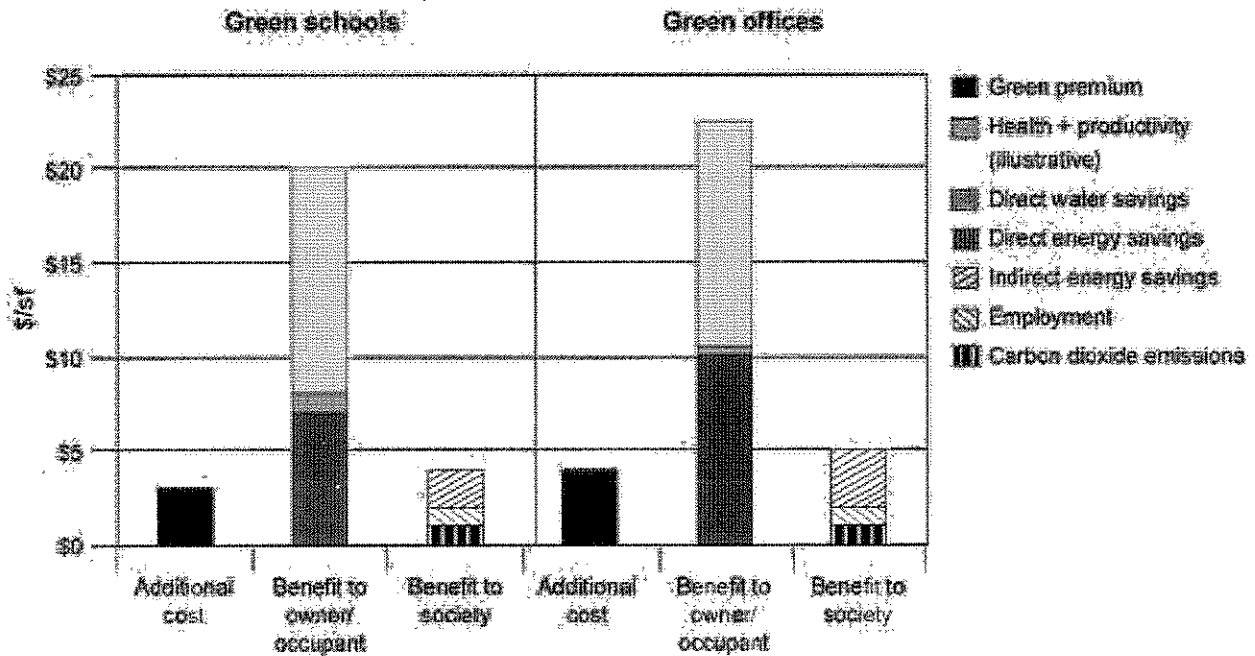
Resilience. Integrated systems that are locally created and managed generally result in richness and redundancy. An example is a diverse economic base of locally-owned businesses and local resource inputs that is less affected by rising transportation and labor costs. These businesses will not "up and leave" the community for a better deal elsewhere because they are of the community.

An enhanced sense of place. With globalization, and the increasing homogeneity that accompanies it, those communities that are resilient, distinctively local, open, and adaptive – and ultimately unique – will succeed as valued places to live, work, and play.

A deep sense of community: Citizens of communities with a strong Civic Ecology share in learning about their community and envisioning its future. They also collaborate on designing the systems to implement that vision and labor together to keep the community on course. They work with strangers, friends, and occasionally enemies to create a collective future for themselves and the next generation. In doing so, they become citizens in-full and experience a true sense of community.

Source D: Benefits Graph

<http://climateprogress.org/2010/09/24/costs-and-benefits-of-green-buildings/>



Illustrative Present Value of 20 Years of Private and Public Benefits for Green Schools and Green Offices in the Data Set

Detailed analysis of 170 green building provided a basis for documenting a set of financial benefits related to health, operations and maintenance and other attributes. About half the identified benefits were quantifiable - ... graphs exclude a range of significant but difficult-to-quantify benefits, including impacts on property values, productivity, student performance, brand benefits, and embodied energy; indirect impacts on water systems; reduced storm-water flow; savings on operations and maintenance; and mitigation of climate change (apart from what is reflected in the CO₂ price of \$10 ton).

SOURCE E: "The Kitchen Scoop" by Beverly Mills and Alicia Ross

<http://kitchenscoop.com/blog/a-vegetable-garden-at-school-can-change-your-life/>

If they grow it, they will eat it. And it just might change their lives.

Efforts to get kids into vegetable gardens seem to be mushrooming (pun intended). We're curious to know if you've run into this trend, too? I recently visited vegetable gardens at two Miami elementary schools and attended a workshop on a teen-run garden at a school in Miami for at-risk youth.

So here these kids are, out in the fresh air, hands in the dirt, making something delicious happen from practically nothing. The results of this program are documented, and they are transformative. (These particular school gardens – and 30 others just like them – are part of the "Plant a Thousand Gardens Collaborative Nutrition Initiative," funded by the nonprofit Education Fund of the Miami-Dade public schools.)

You don't really need statistics to see how amazing it is when kids (even big ones) "play" in the dirt. Pride was all over the place as second- and third-graders at Miami's Lenora B. Smith Elementary and Thena C. Crowder Elementary picked vegetables, pulled weeds and experienced a plethora of smells as they gently rubbed the leaves of the fresh herbs growing in raised beds they helped build.

"Before we started the garden, most of these kids thought vegetables grew in the supermarket," said Hakim Mujahib, a second-grade science teacher at Crowder.

Source F: Can vegetable-oil cars save the world?

*Used restaurant cooking oil is free, clean burning and can power your vehicle.
So why aren't more people using it?*

By Steve Hargreaves, CNNMoney.com staff writer

July 24 2006: 1:35 PM EDT

NEW YORK (CNNMoney.com) -- Gas is expensive. Old vegetable cooking oil from restaurants is free. A car can actually run on either. So why aren't more people ditching petroleum and running on peanut power?

"[Making the switch] couldn't be simpler," said Patrick Kuhn, who converted one of four trucks at his company, Charlotte Moving Truck Rentals, to run on vegetable oil earlier this year. He said his customers love it and constantly choose the veggie-powered vehicle over his others. "I never see that truck anymore," he said.

But while Kuhn's truck may be a hit, for many people life with a veggie car might not be so easy. And although this alternative fuel may be cheap and clean, there simply isn't enough of it to make a big dent in our gas consumption.

Kuhn said it cost \$3,500 to convert the truck to veggie power, which can be done to any diesel engine. That includes adding a fuel tank in the back (which has a heating element inside it, because the oil needs to be kept hot to burn), fuel lines up to the engine, as well as a filter and a valve set and toggle switches so the driver can choose between running on vegetable oil or on conventional diesel fuel.

For the sake of convenience, he buys used restaurant cooking oil from a dealer about an hour away - the same guy, actually, who installed Kuhn's veggie fuel system. Kuhn pays the supplier - who collects, filters and delivers the oil - about \$1.50 a gallon. That compares to the \$3 a gallon he said he'd pay for diesel.

"These trucks, they're not Honda Accords, they consume a lot of fuel," he said, "It pays for itself pretty quickly."

Indeed, the economics of veggie oil are even better for a car than they are for a truck. Briante said the car conversion kit, available online and similar to Kuhn's system, costs about \$800.

Hold the fries

The mechanically inclined can install the system themselves, or it can be installed at one of two dozen Greasecar-certified mechanics nationwide for another \$600.

But Briante said that the government regulations requiring fuel sellers to be licensed would make it hard for most people to keep their veggie-cars fueled - few people would be lucky enough to have a guy nearby who can top off their tank the way Kuhn does.

Instead, many people fuel up by forming a relationship with a local restaurant, which leaves its old cooking oil out back in 5-gallon jugs for the user to collect. (Restaurants usually have to pay to get rid of this oil, so proprietors are often happy to do so.)

Another downside: Users have to strain the oil to clean out the old French fries and such, before they pour it into the tank.

"The infrastructure really isn't in place," said Briante. "My mom's not going to want to do it."

Source G: “Cultivating Failure” by Caitlin Flanagan

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2010/01/cultivating-failure/7819/3/>

“...an agglomeration of foodies and educational reformers who are propelled by a vacuous if well-meaning ideology is responsible for robbing an increasing number of American schoolchildren of hours they might otherwise have spent reading important books or learning higher math (attaining the cultural achievements, in other words, that have lifted uncounted generations of human beings out of the desperate daily scrabble to wrest sustenance from dirt). ...It’s the state’s Department of Education that is to blame for allowing these gardens to hijack the curricula of so many schools.

“Here is the essential question we must ask about the school gardens: What evidence do we have that participation in one of these programs—so enthusiastically supported, so uncritically championed—improves a child’s chances of doing well on the state tests that will determine his or her future (especially the all-important high-school exit exam) and passing Algebra I, which is becoming the make-or-break class for California high-school students? I have spent many hours poring over the endless research on the positive effects of garden curricula, and in all that time, I have yet to find a single study that suggests classroom gardens help students meet the state standards for English and math. Our kids are working in these gardens with the promise of a better chance at getting an education and a high-school diploma but without one bit of proof that their hard work will result in either.”