

**English 80**  
**Reaction Paper #1**

My Personal Story of Stuff

For this semester's first reaction paper, please write a five paragraph essay that responds to Annie Leonard's video, "The Story of Stuff." Please follow the paragraph-specific directions below to help organize your thoughts. Title your paper My Personal Story of Stuff. Please use blue or black ink. If you make a mistake, just cross it out or white it out and continue working. You have 75 minutes to complete this assignment. Make sure you put your name and section number on your paper.

Paragraph One: Introduction

In this paragraph, be sure to introduce the video's title and the writer's name. Next, take a moment to honestly explore your own relationship with stuff. Questions to consider: How much of my self-identity/worth is based on stuff? How strongly do those around me identify me by what I own? How much of my drive to succeed in life is based off of the desire for material wealth and success? How often do I buy something to only use once or twice and then get rid of? Finally, end the paragraph with a thesis statement that takes a stance on stuff. Are you for it? Against it? How has seeing Leonard's video influenced your thoughts on stuff?

Paragraph Two: American Capitalism and Stuff

In this paragraph, please use your own understanding of the American economy and capitalistic system to try to uncover how stuff and the economy are tied together. You may also use what you learned in Leonard's video or chapter to help formulate your ideas. (Feel free to use your notes from Leonard's video or your reading from last night but keep in mind that you only have one hour. This won't give you time to re-read Leonard's article.) Questions to consider: Can we have a system of capitalism without stuff? Or do they go hand in hand? Is this model sustainable? Why or why not?

Paragraph Three: Breaking Down the Five Phases of the Materials Economy

In this paragraph, please address what phase of the materials economy you feel is most detrimental to people and/or the planet. Use facts and statistics directly from Leonard's video or article to help support your argument.

Paragraph Four: Reacting

In this paragraph, take a stance for or against Annie Leonard's argument. Is her stance an overreaction or is there a real threat to the American obsession with stuff? What personal or observational experiences have you had that help you determine the validity of Annie Leonard's argument?

Paragraph Five: Conclusion

Has Leonard's video influenced your thoughts about stuff? Why or why not? What might you do, personally, to change your relationship with stuff and what impact do you think that might have on the greater problem of stuff?