

# Talk Back Letter & Commentary

Dr. Eisenstock | J465 Mass Communication and Popular Culture | Spring 2018

**TALK BACK** Talk back about the role pop culture plays in society: *the good, the bad, and the ugly*. Tell people who profit from popular culture and establish policies and practices what you think about its potential influence on the culture and society. Write a letter that is either **complimentary or critical** of a pop culture icon, product, trend or social behavior you studied for the *Tipping Point Analysis*.

**BACK** Consider the positive benefits and/or negative consequences:  
Does it promote or deter cultural, gender or ethnic stereotypes?  
Does it encourage or discourage bullying, racial profiling or misogyny?  
Does it normalize violence toward women or victimize a particular social group? Is the violence gratuitous or the language offensive? Does it exploit children's vulnerabilities or target teens' insecurities? Does it reinforce or prevent risky lifestyles such as drinking, smoking, and unsafe sex? Does it cultivate gambling or other addictive behaviors? Does it undermine efforts to curb obesity or foster healthy food choices? Does it standardize the thin ideal or muscular body type? Does it heighten the appeal of extreme workouts and disordered eating? Does it send a message that appearance guarantees popularity and materialism brings happiness? Does it isolate people from one another?

The most effective way to voice your opinion is to use your economic power and social media capital to demonstrate approval or disapproval in the consumer culture. If you like it, compliment the company and let them know you are a loyal consumer of the product or service. If you don't like it, criticize their cultural taste and let them know you refuse to use and purchase the product or support the social practice. That means don't watch a particular TV show, rent or go to a movie, read or subscribe to a magazine or blog, listen to a podcast, radio station, certain DJ or recording artist, play a video game, stream a program, download an app or support a social media campaign. When you send this message to the advertiser, manufacturer, corporation, retailer, media outlet or celebrity endorser, make sure to let them know why you do or do not support them. *Tell them what you like and don't like, why you feel this way, and what you plan to do about it.*

Think about what you want to say based on the concepts you have learned and to whom you should send a copy of your letter —people in power in the media, advocacy groups, business and professional organizations, government agencies and public officials, as well as high-profile celebrities. Consider everyone you think should know about your concern. Use your purchase power and social media clout!

**COMMENTARY:** In addition to your letter, write a one-page commentary explaining the cultural significance, why you chose to write a letter to the person/company/group, and what you hope your letter will accomplish.

## GUIDELINES

Letters are judged on the relevance of the ideas, reliability of information clarity and organization of comments, application of the concepts and issues, list of key players to receive a copy, and professionalism of your letter, including format, typos and grammar.

Letters must conform to STANDARD BUSINESS LETTER format and style. TYPE your letter.

Note: Single space paragraphs and double space in between paragraphs.

ADDRESS your letter to a specific person.

INCLUDE date, sender and recipient(s) addresses, salutation, and closing.

PROOFREAD your letter to avoid typos, misspelling, incorrect grammar, and other errors that detract from the professionalism you are trying to communicate. **Errors will result in a lower grade.**

LENGTH: one page

CC List: Attach a separate page that lists names, titles, addresses, and other contact information of additional persons, groups or companies that you think should be informed about the issue.

**TIPS:** Be clear, concise, and cordial.

*Avoid using academic jargon.*

Translate the concepts and theories into plain language.

**Opening paragraph:** *Get right to the point.*

Briefly tell them why you are writing and what action(s) you plan to take. Keep it short, no more than two or three sentences.

**Second paragraph:** *State your viewpoint with conviction.*

Validate your concern or support by providing more details about why you like or don't like the media message or image. Tell them what specific actions you plan to take and that you will encourage family, friends and "friends of friends," colleagues, and others to do the same. Use your digital contacts to spread the word. Let them know if you are a loyal consumer and what they need to do to win back your business.

**Closing paragraph:** *Wrap it up.*

If your letter is critical, encourage them to make changes.

If your letter is complimentary, encourage them to continue doing what they're doing.

**DUE:** *same day as your Tipping Point Analysis and Media Packet*

Check Course Schedule in the syllabus | **NO LATE LETTERS ACCEPTED**

**RESOURCES:** <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/653/01/>