

TO CLEAN OR NOT TO CLEAN

Marcie Brown

[Assignment: Select a group of individuals and classify them into comparable, significant, and mutually exclusive categories. State the principle of classification in your thesis. Your purpose is to share your insightful observations about human beings with your readers.]

(1) The state in which we leave our belongings is an individual decision. When we wake up in the morning, we have to choose whether or not to make our bed, leave our dirty clothes on the floor, or to wash the dishes now or later. Our habits of organizing do not always come from the type of environment in which we were raised. Rather, they are determined by our feeling most comfortable in a particular kind of atmosphere, a particular state of our surroundings. For instance, my family divides into three categories ranging from one extreme to the other. Among us are a meticulous cleanoholic, some mediocre maids, and a few hopeless slob. With such a variety all under one roof, conflicts do arise, but these seem unavoidable because we would never be able to agree on the one way of living. Being orderly is important to some people while others could not care less whether they can see the floor of their room. There are also those who are generally relaxed when it comes to cleaning, but never fail to clean when it is extremely necessary.

(2) To the first category of excessive cleanoholics belongs my mother who insists on the house being completely dust-free and spotless. The majority of her free time is spent doing laundry, dusting, vacuuming, and picking up after her filthy family. People of this sort must arrange things neatly and almost perfectly at all times or they become uncomfortable like most men in women's clothing stores. There are even times when cleanoholics push other commitments aside just so some last minute touch-up can be taken care of. Normally the cleanliness of these people can be seen even in their appearance. Their clothes, hair, and grooming all are flawless just like the rest of their lives. Although obsessive is a strong word to use, we see something close to obsessiveness as individuals such as these attempt to prevent a mess before it even occurs. For example, in the Stainmaster commercial on television a woman gracefully and swiftly leaps across the room to catch a tumbling piece of chocolate cake that is seconds away from ruining her carpet. An excessive cleanoholic wants nothing more than perfection and will do almost anything to achieve it. The example of my mother and the commercial may imply that cleanoholics belong only to one gender. That is not so. I have seen men who are equally compulsive about maintaining perfect order in their belongings.

(3) Being in the middle, the mediocre maids have something in common with both the totally messy people

and the complete perfectionists. Their cleaning habits seem to depend solely on their moods. When they finally feel the need to spring clean it may be closer to fall, but eventually the task will be completed. Cleaning may not be a top priority but it does have some importance in their lives. Such an individual never lets her untidiness overwhelm her but tries to find time to eliminate the disorder as soon as possible. It seems to me that my father and I fit most contentedly within this group. At times we assist my mother and remain on her good side, while at other moments our bad habits take over. When that happens, we watch out for an unbearable confrontation with my outraged mother. The appearance of the mediocre maids is exactly what one might expect. Their ever changing moods affect how they look, dress, and feel that day. Another tendency of people who belongs to the mediocre maid category is that they may decide to clean only to make a good impression when company visits for a weekend.

(4) The hopeless slob is every mother's nightmare. Unfortunately, my mother is raising three of them. My brothers are the type of people who enter their rooms on Monday and cannot find their way out until Friday. They just pile their belongings into enormous heaps all over the floor leaving only inches of walking space. In fact, they will probably never even pick up a dust cloth, a vacuum, or window cleaner unless they are forced to do so. Cleaning is the last thing on their minds so it's futile to expect them to devote even ten minutes for this tedious chore in their busy schedule. These people do not mind the fact that their clothes are always wrinkled or that they cannot tell their clean clothes from their dirty ones. At times an individual in this group may resemble the famous Peanuts character of Pig Pen who always walks with his own personal cloud of dust trailing behind him. Even though to us it may seem more of a chore to find things in a mess than to actually clean it up, the slobs are happy being disorganized people and are in no hurry to change. Eventually, people in this group might outgrow their unclean habits, but if they do not there is still the option of hiring someone who belongs to the first group.

(5) For the most part, most people have a tendency to be members of the average cleaners society--not too neat but not too untidy. They adapt better to living with either of the other extremes. One definite way to instigate a brutal war would be to put an excessive cleanoholic with a hopeless slob under one roof. Believe me, living with the mixture of all three takes not only patience but also understanding.