

Buy Nothing Day

Buy Nothing Day was first organized in Vancouver in 1992. Since 1997 it has been celebrated on the Friday after American Thanksgiving, which is traditionally the first day of the Christmas shopping season and the biggest shopping day of the year in the U.S. Today Buy Nothing Day is celebrated in nearly twenty countries. (Outside of North America it happens on the following Saturday.)

The purpose of Buy Nothing Day is to make people think about the role of shopping, and more broadly consuming, in our culture – to make us pay attention to what we buy and why. In Canada Buy Nothing Day is most promoted by the magazine *Adbusters*, whose mission is to encourage people to question advertising messages. Celebrating Buy Nothing Day may involve protests, demonstrations or other media events, but it can also be observed in a more personal and reflective way.

Answer the following questions on lined paper and be prepared to discuss them in class.

- 1) Do you think that we buy more things than we really need each day? Make a list of things which your family would normally spend money on each day, i.e. food, gas, bus fare, clothing etc.
- 2) Why do we, as a culture, feel compelled to buy things we don't need for survival?
- 3) Do you think commercials and advertisements make us feel we need things when we really don't?
- 4) Why do you think our culture and media encourage us to buy things constantly? Is this a good, bad or neutral thing? Why?
- 5) Do you think Buy Nothing Day is an event worth observing? Why or why not?