

TODAY

Burger Nation

McDonald's is bigger than ever
—and unfortunately so are we.

Look online at www.scholastic.com/storyworks
for more activities to do with these stories!

3. On a separate piece of paper, write a paragraph that explains how the two restaurants are similar and how they are different.

What's the No. 1 fast-food chain in the world, with more than 31,000 restaurants serving 52 million people in more than 120 countries? How about the biggest toy distributor, with more than 1.5 billion toys given away every year? The answer to both of these questions is one and the same: McDonald's. Since 1955, when Ray Kroc and Richard and Mac McDonald opened their first restaurant, McDonald's has become much more than a chain of restaurants. It has changed Americans' eating habits. And critics say this is a problem.

As the fast-food industry has gotten bigger, so have American bodies. Today, more than 60 million adults and 9 million children over the age of 6 in America are "obese," meaning they are excessively overweight. And obesity often leads to dangerous and even deadly diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, and strokes. So what does this have to do with McDonald's?

Nutritionists believe fast-food consumption



is a leading cause of this dangerous epidemic. A typical "super-sized" McDonald's meal—a Big Mac, large fries, and a large coke—has 59 grams of fat. That's almost the entire amount of fat that an average person should eat in a day! And that's not all. America has shared its love of fast food—and the obesity epidemic—with people all over the world. Since the expansion of McDonald's into other countries, the number of people suffering from obesity has risen to 1.5 billion according to the World Health Organization—the highest percentage ever.

But it seems that McDonald's, Burger King, and other fast-food chains are aware of this problem—and are making changes. Healthier choices like fresh salads, wraps, and even veggie burgers are now staples on menu boards. McDonald's was one of the first restaurants to start cutting out the use of "trans fats" in their cooking. And a nutrition chart is now posted on every front counter so that customers can understand exactly what they're digesting when they chow down on their favorite fast-food meal.

Experts hope that McDonald's will take the lead in helping Americans live healthier lives. After all, they've changed the way Americans ate once before—maybe they will do it again. ■