

TAKE
A SIDE

Debate

Directions: Read the article. Study the facts. Decide what you think. Go to www.scholastic.com/storyworks for more debates!



Is It Worth It?

You're paying big bucks for designer brands. Ever wonder why? **By Kristin Lewis**



For Christmas last year, Marie's* grandma wanted to get her something special.

"Anything you want," her grandma said.

So Marie asked for her dream gift: a brand-new pair of UGG boots. ALL her friends had them—literally, every single one.

On Christmas morning, Marie's grandma handed her a big box. Inside was a pair of cozy, brown, fur-lined suede boots. They fit perfectly. The quality was superb. Only one thing was missing: the tiny tag on the heel that said UGG.

Marie thanked her grandma. But she's only worn those boots twice—both times to visit her grandmother.

"I would never wear them in public," she says with a shudder.

Marie's grandmother would be heartbroken to know the truth. But at UGG headquarters, a roomful of executives would be cheering. Through clever marketing and expensive advertising, the makers of UGGs have convinced Marie—and millions of others—that the name UGG has value far beyond what the fuzzy slipper boots should really cost. UGGs, like North Face jackets, Nike sneakers, Beats headphones, and other brand-name items, are status symbols. People pay double, triple, even 10 times more for brand names than for similar items. Is a \$98 Butter hoodie really better than the \$14 one you can get at Walmart? Maybe the



Stars like Selena Gomez are often paid by companies to promote their brands. These arrangements are known as endorsements.

quality is a bit higher. Maybe the fabric is extra soft. But are brand names really worth the outrageous prices?

"I Belong"

Some pricey brands do, in fact, use higher-quality materials that fit better and feel nice on your skin. A Patagonia jacket will likely last longer than the Target variety. Some companies guarantee their products and make returns easy. It's doubtful that Target would take a product back years from now, no questions asked.

However, the truth is that



the value of a brand has little to do with quality and a lot to do with status. A recent study by *Consumer Reports* magazine found that some of the least expensive jeans are better-made than their designer counterparts. But for some shoppers, that doesn't matter. Wearing a certain label tells the world "I belong" or "I can afford it."

Boatloads of Cash

A few decades ago, the idea of a kid refusing to wear a pair of boots because the label wasn't "in" would have seemed crazy.

Clearly, times have changed.

Still, you have to give companies like UGG some credit. They charge much more for their

products than other companies do. They hire celebrities like Britney Spears or Selena Gomez to endorse their products so you'll want to buy them. They convince millions of people that it makes sense to fork over boatloads of cash for their brand-name items. And they get away with it.

As for Marie? She finally got her UGGs (on sale), but after three months, they were worn and ratty. She could wear the boots her grandma got her, which still look new.

As if! ■

This debate goes perfectly with our fiction story, "Good Enough." Go online to find an activity linking these two features!

**Not her real name*

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Are brand-name products worth the price?

Go back to the article and find information to support each side. Write the information on the lines below.

YES It's all about labels.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

NO What a rip-off!

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Study the points on both sides of the argument—and think about your own opinion. State your opinion in one sentence below. This can become the thesis statement for an essay on this topic.

FIND AN ACTIVITY SHEET ONLINE!

