

A 'heathenish liquor'? A cure for cancer? The history of coffee is full of surprises

Level 1: Elementary / Pre-Intermediate

1 Warmer

- a. Which countries produce the most coffee in the world? Put them in order from 1 (the most) to 6.

Honduras
Colombia
Ethiopia
Brazil
Vietnam
Indonesia

2 Key words

- a. Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text. Then, find and highlight them to see them in context.

bowel

drowsy

leaflet

merchant

petition

- Your _____ is the part of your body that forms solid waste.
- A _____ is someone who buys and sells things.
- A _____ is a piece of paper that gives you information or advertises something.
- If you are _____, you have a feeling that you want to sleep.
- A _____ is a document that many people sign asking someone in authority to do something.

compound

fibre

millionaire

survey

wheat

- A _____ is someone who has money that is worth at least 1,000,000 dollars, pounds, euros, etc.
- _____ is a grain that people use to make bread.
- A _____ is a set of questions that you ask a large number of people.
- A _____ is a chemical substance.
- _____ is the parts of fruit, vegetables, and grains that your bod cannot digest.

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- 1 A recent study showed that people with bowel cancer who drink coffee—quite a lot of coffee, two to four cups a day—are less likely to suffer a return of the disease. Coffee affects the body, but whether that effect is positive or negative has been the subject of argument since the 15th century.
- 2 At first, people thought coffee was a sort of medicine. Turkish merchants brought coffee to Venice, where people drank it cold. Europe's first coffee houses appeared in the 1650s in London. By 1663, there were 82 coffee houses in London. Customers believed the new drink was good for their health.
- 3 Coffee-house owners produced a leaflet saying coffee was good for the heart and helped prevent headaches. The leaflet also said that coffee could stop people from feeling drowsy but warned them that they should not drink it after dinner because it would stop them from sleeping.
- 4 Not everyone agreed. A women's petition in 1674 complained about the "excessive use of coffee" by their husbands. The petition called for men to start drinking beer again. Perhaps pub owners produced the petition and not wives protesting about their husbands drinking coffee.
- 5 Negative advertising appeared again two centuries later in the US. The businessman CW Post criticised coffee. He became a millionaire just seven years after starting up a business manufacturing Postum, a drink made from wheat, in 1895.
- 6 Since the 1960s, surveys of coffee drinkers have shown different evidence of its effect. Early studies identified a strong negative effect, probably because they didn't include other lifestyle choices – especially smoking. In 1991, the World Health Organization named coffee as a possible cause of cancer, but in 2016, it changed this as other studies have shown a larger number of the positive effects of coffee drinking.
- 7 These positive effects may be because of the hundreds of unique compounds in a single coffee cup. The high quantities of fibre in brewed coffee may be good for bowel health, and coffee contains plenty of antioxidants, which can protect people against ageing and dementia.

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3 Comprehension check

a. Answer these questions about the text.

1. When did coffee drinking begin?
2. Where were the first coffee houses in Europe?
3. How many coffee houses were there in London by 1663?
4. What did the leaflet warn people?
5. What did the petition of 1674 complain about?
6. What was Postum?
7. When did CW Post become a millionaire?
8. What can antioxidants give protection against?

4 Key language

a. Fill the gaps in the phrases using these prepositions.

about against for of on

1. have a(an) effect _____ (something)
2. complain _____ (something)
3. good _____ your health
4. (a) cause _____ a disease
5. protection _____ (something)

b. Use the phrases from task A to fill the sentence gaps. You may have to change the form of some words.

1. Many people believe that green tea is _____ you.
2. Smoking can _____ bad _____ your health.
3. My co-worker is always _____ our boss's decisions.
4. Some people believe that amulets can give you _____ bad luck.
5. Many doctors are trying to find _____ different diseases to try to prevent them.

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5 Discussion

a. Discuss these questions.

- Do you drink coffee? Why (not)?
- What is your favourite drink? What do you like about it?

6 In your own words

a. Use an internet search engine to find more information about coffee's positive and negative effects. Find as much information as possible.

b. Present your findings to your class.