

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

Level 1: Elementary / Pre-Intermediate – Teacher's notes

Article summary: The article describes the history of coffee and how attitudes towards it have changed over the years. It also discusses the potential health benefits of drinking coffee.

Time: 45–60 minutes

Skills: Reading, Speaking

Language focus: Vocabulary

Materials needed: One copy of the worksheet per student

1. Warmer

- a. The purpose of this activity is to introduce the topic of coffee drinking. This is a general-knowledge activity, which may encourage some discussion, even argument, among students. Brazil (which produces 2,652,000 metric tonnes of coffee a year) is certainly in the first place, but the order of the other five countries is more debatable.

Key:

- | | |
|-------------|--------------|
| 1. Brazil | 4. Indonesia |
| 2. Vietnam | 5. Honduras |
| 3. Colombia | 6. Ethiopia |

2. Key words

- a. Ask students to do the exercise individually and compare their answers in pairs or small groups. Note that the word *merchant* refers to traders in the historical period described in the article. People who buy and sell goods today are more usually known as *traders*.

Key:

- | | |
|-------------|----------------|
| 1. bowel | 6. millionaire |
| 2. merchant | 7. wheat |
| 3. leaflet | 8. survey |
| 4. drowsy | 9. compound |
| 5. petition | 10. fibre |

3. Comprehension check

- a. Ask students to work individually to answer the questions and then compare their answers in pairs or small groups. The answers given are just examples. Students may say something different that is correct. For example, in item 4, they might say, 'not to drink coffee after dinner'.

Key:

1. in the fifteenth century
2. London
3. eighty-two
4. that coffee might stop them from sleeping
5. men drinking too much coffee
6. a drink made from wheat
7. in 1902
8. ageing and dementia

4. Key language

- a. Ask students to compare their answers in pairs. Then, ask them to check their answers in the text.

Key:

1. digestive system
2. health benefits
3. art form
4. brain fog
5. lifestyle choices
6. court ruling

- b. Ask students to compare their answers in pairs. Then, ask them to check their answers in the text.

Key:

1. good for
2. have a (bad) effect on
3. complaining about
4. protection against
5. the cause of

5. Discussion

- a. Allow students time to note down their ideas about each statement and encourage them to say why they agree or disagree with each one.

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6. In your own words

a-b. The task could also be done as homework, and students could then present their reports to the class. If you have a large class, you can set up a debate in two teams defending the positive or negative effects of coffee on people. This way, you can make sure everyone gets to voice an opinion on either side of the argument.