

# Food for thought

# Literacy

Children are linked to the wider world on a daily basis through the food they eat. Few issues demonstrate more clearly the complex relationship and links between people and environments north and south. The wide range of food we have become accustomed to eating is largely dependent on producers in less developed countries satisfying our demands for year round variety and choice.

This trade in food has led to greater opportunities for a varied and interesting diet in the north. Conversely in the countries of the south it has often limited choice, reduced access to productive land and led to exploitation of people and environments. This leaflet highlights the effects of choices we make about food and provides children with the knowledge to make choices which empower food producers and help protect the environment.

## What price our food?

Check out an average supermarket and it will reveal our food demands and habits. The fruit and vegetable section offering any product, at any time, from anywhere around the world demonstrates our desire for an ever greater variety of foods all year round.

In addition Supermarket 'price wars', where supermarket chains battle for customers through food pricing, demonstrate our desire to pay less and less for the food we eat.

## So what's wrong with paying less and getting more?

The problem is that we are not paying the true cost for our food. By examining only the checkout price of food we ignore the many hidden costs associated with food production: costs to people's health, quality of life and costs to wildlife and the environment.

## Social costs

Much of the food we buy relatively cheaply in the UK is grown by people in developing countries. Land is often converted from valuable 'eco-systems' such as rainforest or from land which would otherwise supply food for the needs of local people to land for growing cash crops for export. Furthermore the market price is often so low that many food producers cannot even afford to feed their own children properly. In Brazil, for example, the world's second highest food exporter, around 60 million people still don't have adequate food to eat.

## Environmental cost

Many modern farming methods involve the use of toxic chemicals and fertilizers which damage soils, leach into water systems and harm wildlife and the environment. Transporting food products hundreds or even thousands of miles also causes pollution and contributes to global warming. For example it takes up to five litres of fuel to fly just one kilogram of fruit or vegetables from South America to the UK.

## How can my food choices make a difference?

Buying organic products guarantees that food is produced without the use of artificial chemicals and land is managed in a way which protects wildlife and the environment and ensures good animal welfare standards. Fairtrade products guarantee food producers in less developed countries fairer wages, decent safe working conditions and good housing.

So while organic and Fairtrade foods may be slightly more expensive to buy, they don't include the hidden cost of environmental damage and unfair trade.

A literacy activity investigating how one Fair trade producer promotes its product	45 mins	Year 3 and 4
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**Suggested lesson structure**

The aim of this activity is to focus on one Fairtrade chocolate brand, *Divine*, and explore possible reasons for the choice of product name and slogan used.

**Comprehension: suggested questions and activities**

- Why has the name *Divine* been chosen for the chocolate? Do you think this is a good or a bad name for a chocolate? Why / why not?
- The slogan used on packets of Divine chocolate is: *Heavenly Chocolate with a heart*. Why do you think the producers of the chocolate used the words 'heavenly' and 'heart'?



**Fairtrade: the answer - suggested responses to the questions posed**

Divine is often a term used to express delight or pleasure at something, so is an appropriate name for chocolate. 'Heavenly' links well with the name of the chocolate as both words are 'godly' or spiritual. 'Heart' plays on the idea of 'have a heart'; show sympathy etc. The producers are trying to convey the message that *Divine* is a delicious chocolate that also helps improve the lives of the people who grow the cocoa used in the chocolate bars.

For more on the story of Divine see: <http://www.divinechocolate.com/uk/about-us/research-resources/divine-story>

**Writing activity**

Children could investigate other slogans used in promoting products, both Fairtrade and non-Fairtrade. They could then design a poster advert for a different Fair trade food product such as tea, coffee, honey, bananas or a wide range of other Fairtrade food products. This provides an opportunity to introduce children to the wide range of Fair trade food products now available through supermarkets and Fair trade stores such as Oxfam shops. Issues to consider in designing a poster advert will be a suitable name for the product and slogan, which promotes both the taste aspects and the beneficial aspects of Fairtrade, i.e. the benefit to the producers and the fact that the producers have taken care of the environment.



	Knowledge and Understanding		Skills		Values and Attitudes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Social justice and equity	<input type="checkbox"/>	Critical thinking	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sense of identity and self-esteem
<input type="checkbox"/>	Diversity	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ability to argue effectively	<input type="checkbox"/>	Empathy and sense of common humanity
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Globalisation and Interdependence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ability to challenge injustice & inequalities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Commitment to social justice and equity
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sustainable development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Respect for people and things	<input type="checkbox"/>	Valuing and respecting diversity
<input type="checkbox"/>	Peace and conflict	<input type="checkbox"/>	Co-operation and conflict resolution	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Concern for the environment and commitment to sustainable development
				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Belief that people can make a difference

## Further Activity

### Heavenly chocolate? A practical blind tasting activity

**This offers a chance for children to determine how heavenly Divine chocolate really is.** The activity could be carried out at school or suggested as an outside school activity with friends or family, Children set up and carry out their own comparative tasting experiment. This can determine how highly Divine is rated when compared to other brands (which the children should choose) such as Galaxy, and Cadbury's Dairy Milk for example.

Small pieces of the brands of chocolate chosen for testing should be prepared. Children should decide on a standard system of assessing the chocolates, e.g. a score out of 10, for each chocolate, or rating them first, second, third, etc. They could ask for descriptive words to describe the chocolate (positive and negative). They should consider how to make the tasting experiment a fair test. Examples might include: children blindfolded so that only taste is being assessed (seeing the chocolate might reveal the brand name which could affect the result.) and sipping water as a 'mouth wash' between tasting different brands. The children can then think about how to analyse the results and decide what the results reveal.

If Divine is the favourite then it reveals that a chocolate which is fairly traded and benefits the producers can taste good too. If Divine is not the favourite but none the less scores highly, there is an opportunity to consider what balance to strike between taste and benefiting producers. If Divine scores badly and is clearly unpopular, children could write to the Day Chocolate Company explaining why the chocolate was unpopular: The Day Chocolate Company, 4 Gainsford Street London SE1 2NE

<b>I was Hungry</b>	<b>Literacy Food</b>	
<b>A literacy activity exploring how food attitudes and practices contribute to global social and economic inequality</b>	<b>45 mins</b>	<b>Year 5 and 6</b>

### Suggested lesson structure

The aim of this activity is to focus on text level work where a poem is investigated to identify the message being conveying. The poem: I WAS HUNGRY, also enables the reader to examine the feelings of the writer and consider the target audience as well as exploring what messages, moods, feelings and attitudes the writer wishes to convey and the methods used to convey these.

### Reading comprehension: suggested questions and activities

- What message is being conveyed by the poem?
- By examining each line consider what the writer is implying about 'my', 'our', 'you', and 'your' in the poem
- What is the writer suggesting about the relationship between himself and the person he/she is addressing through this poem?
- Investigate what devices are used by the writer to convey his point of view

### Vocabulary box

The following are examples of words which may be used or introduced when considering the reading comprehension questions and activities

**exploited exploiter exploitation inequality unequal injustice  
unjust power powerless wealth poverty greed**

### Writing comprehension:

A possible writing task following the text work would be to ask children to write a poem in similar style exploring the relationship between people in an exploiter/exploited relationship. Additional lines could be written for the I WAS HUNGRY poem or an alternative first line could be used such as I WAS THIRSTY, I WAS HOMELESS or I WAS LANDLESS. A 'brainstorm' of appropriate first lines could be useful before children begin writing.

The key points would be the use of similar structure, language patterns and literacy devices to convey a message about a global, social or environmental issue.

### Poetry text

#### I was hungry...

I WAS HUNGRY  
And you fed your animals with my food  
I WAS HUNGRY  
And your multinationals planted your winter tomatoes on our best land  
I WAS HUNGRY  
And you wouldn't give up your steak from South America  
I WAS HUNGRY  
But they grew coffee for you where corn might grow for my daily meal  
I WAS HUNGRY  
But you turned our sugar cane and manioc\* into fuel for your cars  
I WAS HUNGRY  
But the waste from your factories is poisoning the fishing grounds of the earth  
I WAS HUNGRY  
But with your money you bought up my food  
I WAS HUNGRY  
While my land grows exotic fruit for your table

\*manioc is cassava, a root vegetable which can be used to make flour

Poem from *We ask why they are hungry*, Christian Aid and CAFOD

### Further Activity

#### Hunger: What can be done?

This activity encourages children to consider possible solutions to hunger and provides a good follow up activity to the poetry comprehension activity in this leaflet. The activity provides real life examples of how people positively challenge hunger.

### What to do

Read the following statements to the children or photocopy them for small group work. The statements could be discussed and the relevant countries identified on a world map.

<p>Danielle lives in Brazil. Her mother says: "The children get a meal at school, but sometimes it is only bread and margarine". Danielle's mother is trying to grow her own vegetables to give her children more food."</p>	<p>Akasuwa from Ghana sells her cocoa to a Fair trade organisation which pays her a good price. "I make more money than I did before. Most of it will go on the children's school fees."</p>
<p>Anthony and his wife were driven from their land in Kenya. When they were able to come back they were given tools and seeds to start farming again. Four months later they were eating what they had grown. Anthony says: "Today things are different. Now I can grow this food, I feel strong."</p>	<p>In the north of England a 'food bank' has been set up. This collects food from local companies and gives it to people who need it. Lindsay who is the coordinator of the food bank says: "The amount of food that is wasted in this country is very sad. What's the point of dumping food in a skip when there are hungry people just around the corner."</p>

Having discussed the statements, ask children to list ideas for tackling hunger. The statements should act as a prompt. Ideas might include: paying people fairly for what they produce; giving unsold food to people who need it; helping people who do not have enough to eat to grow their own food, and allowing people access to land for growing food for themselves rather than for others (cash crops). What other ideas do the children have?

Based on an activity contained in *Making a Meal of It!* Oxfam GB 1998

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### Taking Action

- Staffroom action. A very practical way in which a school can demonstrate its commitment to food producers in developing countries is by purchasing Fair trade tea and coffee for the school staffroom.
- The setting up of 'fruit tuck shops' enables schools to examine the different options available and to explore, perhaps through school councils, the dilemma between buying low price/hidden costs fruit and higher price Fair trade and organic fruit which offers a fairer deal to producers and the environment