export | symbolic | domestic | integrate | efficient

This week's issue:

SHOULD PEOPLE CONTINUE TO EAT MEAT?

After reading the book *Charlotte's Web,* 10-year-old Alia made a big decision. She decided she would not eat meat anymore. She did not want animals to be killed for food. Her story is not unique. Lately many children are choosing to be vegetarian.

Vegetarians do not eat any beef, pork, chicken, fish, or other meats. Some vegetarians choose their meat-free diet for health reasons. Some choose this diet because of their concern for animals, and others because of their concern for the environment.

Meat consumption has been linked to health problems such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and increased rates of diabetes and heart disease. By replacing meat with beans and nuts, vegetarians eat a diet lower in saturated fat and higher in fiber than meat eaters.

Nonetheless, eating meat is an **efficient** way for people to get enough protein, iron, and vitamin B12, since it contains all of these nutrients. In contrast, vegetarians have to plan their meals carefully to get all their nutrients.

Some people say that meat doesn't just taste good; it is also part of the American way of life. A roasted turkey is **symbolic** of Thanksgiving. Hamburgers and hot dogs are traditional foods for Fourth of July barbecues. Beef chili, barbecued ribs, and southern fried chicken are all classic American foods. For some Americans, eliminating meat would be like giving up an essential part of our culture and traditions.

Could the American tradition of eating meat be hurting the earth? Raising animals and transporting meat creates almost one-fifth of the earth's greenhouse gases. This is more than the greenhouse gases produced by cars, trucks, trains, and airplanes combined. In addition, almost half of the water used in the U.S. goes to raising livestock.

Most of the beef produced domestically is eaten by Americans. However, **exports** are also increasing as more countries **integrate** meat into their daily diets. As a result, the meat industry is thriving. Reducing meat consumption could damage an important **domestic** industry, hurting the economy and taking away precious jobs.

Some people choose another option. "Flexitarians" are vegetarians who eat meat occasionally. Flexitarians believe that a diet should be mostly plant-based, but that meat and fish can be healthy and responsible choices if consumed in moderation.

With all of the benefits of vegetarianism, should people continue to eat meat? Are tradition and industry more important than the environment and health benefits?

Questions for Classroom Discussion:

- What is a vegetarian?
- Why do people choose to eat a vegetarian diet?
- Why do people choose to eat meat?
- What are some concerns about the meat industry?
- Do you think eliminating meat would mean giving up an essential part of American culture?

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USE THE FOCUS WORDS *and alternate parts of speech

export *(noun)* a good or service sent to another country for sale

Sample Sentence: **Exports** are increasing as people around the world add more meat into their daily diets.

Turn and Talk: Why might having a lot of **exports** be good for a country's economy?

***export** *(verb)* to send something to another country, especially for sale

Sample Sentence: China **exports** many goods that are sold around the world.

Turn and Talk: What kind of transportation is needed to **export** large machines to far-away countries? (Machines are the U.S.'s number one export.)

symbolic *(adjective)* representative of something else, such as an idea

Sample Sentence: A huge roasted turkey is **symbolic** of Thanksgiving.

Turn and Talk: What is one thing that is **symbolic** of your city?

domestic *(adjective)* made in, done in, or otherwise related to one's own country

Sample Sentence: Reducing meat consumption could damage an important **domestic** industry.

Turn and Talk: Why do some people try to buy **domestic** rather than foreign products?

integrate *(verb)* to combine or unite into a whole

Sample Sentence: Residents of more and more countries are **integrating** meat into their daily diets.

Turn and Talk: Describe some challenges that immigrants might face when **integrating** into U.S. society.

efficient *(adjective)* productive without wasting time, energy, or resources; effective

Sample Sentence: Nonetheless, a vegetarian diet is not a very **efficient** way for people to get enough protein, iron, and vitamin B12.

Turn and Talk: Do you think that you are becoming more or less **efficient** at studying for tests?

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DO THE MATH

Option 1: Many Americans believe that a healthy diet **integrates** meat. After all, meat is an **efficient** source of calories and protein. Meat can also be a powerful symbol. For many Americans, a thick steak represents success, and hot dogs represent summertime baseball.

For many farmers and ranchers, meat production is also a way to earn a living. The U.S. **exports** billions of pounds of meat a year in addition to the billions of pounds sold in the **domestic** market for consumption. This table from beefusa.org shows the number of pounds of meat eaten by the average American during five different years.

Year	Average meat consumption per person
1985	200.4 lbs
1990	200.7 lbs
1995	207.7 lbs
2000	213.9 lbs
2005	220.2 lbs

How much more meat per year did the average American eat in 2005 than in 1985?

A. 0.2 pounds
B. 0.8 pounds
C. 19.2 pounds
D. 19.8 pounds

Option 2: For vegetarians, meat can be **symbolic** of cruelty to animals. While eating meat is an **efficient** way to take in calories, most people get enough calories anyway. A vegetarian diet that **integrates** beans, nuts, and vitamin supplements can be just as healthy as a diet with meat. Domestically, about 3% of young people ages 8–18 are vegetarian.

If two young Americans ages 8–18 are selected at random, what are the chances that both of them are vegetarian?

.03 x .03 = .0009, or .09%

Average Annual Per Capita Consumption of Meat:
http://www.beefusa.org/uDocs/annualpercapitaconsumption-meat-retail.pdf

Discussion Question: The U.S. produces billions of pounds of meat each year: some for **export**, and some to be eaten domestically. According to beefusa.org, most Americans have a diet that **integrates** over half a pound of meat a day. What will happen if more Americans become vegetarian? Which people might lose money and which people might earn more money? In order to feed people efficiently, how should the food industry change?

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THINK SCIENTIFICALLY

Sasha, a student in Ms. Kahn's class, is vegetarian. "I can **integrate** all the nutrients I need into my diet without eating meat," she says, "so why should any animals be harmed?"

Jamal is not vegetarian, but has decided to eat less meat. Jamal claims, "Raising livestock for food is not an **efficient** use of our resources. Over 50% of the corn and soybeans grown in the world are fed to animals instead of hungry people! The United States does not just **export** products to other countries; we **export** our ideas too. We should set a good example by trying to eat less meat."

Anthony disagrees with the other students. "The way we eat is **symbolic** of being American!" he says. "Eating meat has always been an important tradition in this country."

Sasha says, "I don't think that's right. I heard that Americans used to eat much less meat than they do today. That means there are so many more animals killed for food than there used to be."

"No way!" said Anthony. "I'll look it up."

Anthony checked data from the U.S. Census and the Humane Society to investigate eating patterns in the U.S. over time.

Question: Has the number of animals killed for food per person in the United States gone up over time?

Hypothesis: The number of animals killed for food per person in the United States has stayed about the same from 1950 to 2000.

Procedure:

1. Record the total number of farm animals killed for food in the United States in 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2010.
2. Record the total population of the United States for each year listed.
3. For each year listed, calculate how many farm animals were killed for food per person.

Here are the data that Anthony found:

Year	Total Number of Farm Animals Killed for Food in One Year in the U.S.	Total United States Population	Number of Farm Animals Killed for Food in One Year, Per Person
1950	0.1 billion	152 million	**less than 1 (about 0.7)**
1960	1.8 billion	181 million	**about 10**
1970	3.2 billion	205 million	about 16
1980	4.5 billion	227 million	about 20
1990	6.4 billion	249 million	about 26
2000	8.9 billion	281 million	about 32
2010	9.2 billion	309 million	about 30

Complete Anthony's table above. Do you notice a trend? If so, what is the trend?

The number of farm animals killed annually for food per person in the U.S. dramatically increased from 1950–2000 and slightly declined from 2000–2010.

What would you predict the data to be this year? Do you have ideas about how you could find that data?

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DEBATE THE ISSUE

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

A

☐ People should not eat meat.

OR

B

☐ People should include a limited amount of meat in their diets.

OR

C

☐ People should eat as much meat as they want.

OR

CREATE YOUR OWN

☐ _____

_____

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Jot down a few notes on how to support your position during a discussion or debate.

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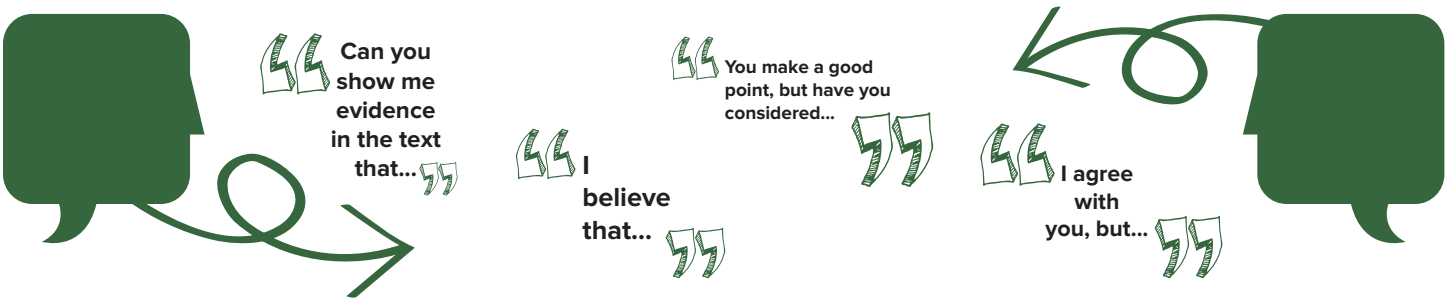
Be a strong participant by using phrases like these:



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TAKE A STAND

Support your position with clear reasons and specific examples. Try to use relevant words from the Word Generation list in your response.

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