

The Sugar Industry

Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. How do young children develop a “sweet tooth”?
2. Do you consume sugary drinks even when you aren't thirsty?
3. Should sugary treats be used as a reward?
4. Which treats do you prefer, salty or sweet? Name your favorite unhealthy snacks.



B. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many words and meanings as you can. Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on page 2.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| ___ 1. wean off | a) to control |
| ___ 2. sweet tooth | b) a strong feeling of wanting |
| ___ 3. innate | c) a main part of one's diet |
| ___ 4. regulate | d) the eating or drinking of something |
| ___ 5. staple | e) to slowly cut back on |
| ___ 6. craving | f) a preference for sugary foods and drinks |
| ___ 7. point the finger | g) too much of something |
| ___ 8. tactic | h) natural, born with (not learned) |
| ___ 9. excess | i) to accuse someone specific |
| ___ 10. consumption | j) a strategy to achieve a goal |

Reading

THE SUGAR INDUSTRY

*Is it time to **wean** ourselves **off** sugar?*

1. Do you have a **sweet tooth**? Most people do, though some people seem to be born with a stronger preference for sugar than others. Regardless of whether or not our preference for sugar is **innate**, most health professionals agree that our sugar intake needs to be **regulated**. First and foremost, sugary food and beverages should be considered a treat, not a **staple**.
2. Who is to blame for our sugar **cravings**? Many people **point the finger** at the sugar industry. Some say that sugar is the new tobacco. Like the tobacco industry, the sugar industry has been accused of using **tactics** to reduce consumers' health concerns. In the US and Australia, the sugar industry has blocked changes to dietary guidelines that would limit sugar consumption, except in a few local communities. Likewise, beverage and candy companies have funded research efforts to convince consumers that sugar does not pose a health hazard.
3. While most consumers are unaware of these behind-the-scene tactics, most adults know that **excess** sugar can cause tooth decay, diabetes, and obesity. Children, on the other hand, only know what tastes good! Should we be pointing the finger at parents? Some parents and teachers reward children with sugary treats. What about advertisers? Should companies be allowed to market sugary products to kids?
4. Some governments, including the UK, have imposed a sugar tax on sweetened beverages. Is this a step in the right direction? While a tax can't prevent diabetes and obesity, it might remind buyers that there is no dietary need for soda pop. Do we need a reminder? Many consumers feel that it's up to the individual to monitor **consumption**. Would you cut back on sugar if you had to pay more for sugary products? Is giving up sugar as tough as giving up cigarettes?

*"Sugar is the
new tobacco."*

—Professor Simon Capewell

Comprehension

Discuss these questions in pairs. Then write the answers in your notebook.

1. What industry is compared to the sugar industry in this reading, and why?
2. What does the reading say about candy companies?
3. According to this reading, how do parents contribute to childhood obesity?
4. What do some governments want to do in order to reduce diabetes and obesity in their nation's population?
5. What could be another subtitle for this reading?

Vocabulary Review

A. Chunking

Create six words or expressions by pairing the words that are commonly found together in English. Then write a sentence for each example.

Word List

- | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|-----------|----------------|
| • sugar | • tooth | • craving | • professional |
| • obesity | • childhood | • back on | • health |
| • the scenes | • cut | • decay | • behind |

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Vocabulary Review cont.

B. Odd One Out

Which word or expression does not belong?

- feel like
 - crave
 - disguise
 - desire
- too much
 - extreme
 - excess
 - candy
- regulate
 - eat
 - drink
 - consume
- strategy
 - innate
 - plan
 - tactic
- obesity
 - wean off
 - reduce
 - cut back
- natural
 - unlearned
 - innate
 - staple

Discussion

- Who deserves the most blame for childhood obesity: parents, the sugar industry/companies, or governments?
- How difficult would it be to cut sugar from your diet? What would you cut? What could you not cut?
- Sugary drinks have been called the “alcohol of childhood.” Do you think this is a fair comparison? Why or why not?

Critical Thinking

IN PAIRS OR SMALL GROUPS

Tobacco companies have been forced to place graphic images and warnings on cigarette packaging to warn users of the associated health risks. Should similar graphics be placed on candy bars and soda pop? Would this help prevent obesity and diabetes?

Listening

Fill in the blanks as you listen to the recording.

THE SUGAR INDUSTRY

Is it time to wean ourselves off sugar?

1. Do you have a sweet tooth? Most people do, though some people seem to be born with a stronger preference for sugar than others. Regardless of _____ our preference for sugar is innate, most health professionals agree that our sugar intake needs to be regulated. First and foremost, sugary food and beverages should be considered a treat, not a staple.
2. Who is _____ for our sugar cravings? Many people point the finger at the sugar industry. Some say that sugar is the new tobacco. Like the tobacco industry, the sugar industry has been accused of using tactics to reduce consumers' health concerns. In the US and Australia, the sugar industry has blocked changes to dietary _____ that would limit sugar consumption, except in a few local communities. Likewise, beverage and candy companies have funded research efforts to convince consumers that sugar does not pose a health hazard.
3. While most consumers are unaware of these _____ tactics, most adults know that excess sugar can cause tooth decay, diabetes, and obesity. Children, on the other hand, only know what tastes good! Should we be pointing the finger at parents? Some parents and teachers reward children with sugary treats. What about _____? Should companies be allowed to market sugary products to kids?
4. Some governments, including the UK, have imposed a sugar tax on sweetened beverages. Is this a step in the right direction? While a tax can't prevent diabetes and _____, it might remind buyers that there is no dietary need for soda pop. Do we need a reminder? Many consumers feel that it's up to the individual to monitor consumption. Would you _____ on sugar if you had to pay more for sugary products? Is giving up sugar as tough as _____ cigarettes?

Answer Key

LESSON DESCRIPTION:

The lesson includes vocabulary review exercises, comprehension questions, and discussion questions.

TEACHING TIPS:

See *Discussion Starters Teaching Guide* (<https://esllibrary.com/courses/72/lessons/>) for a variety of ways to use the reading.

LEVEL: Int

TIME: 1.5–2 hours

TAGS: discussion, consumerism, children, dental, business, industry, sugar industry, health

Pre-Reading

A. WARM-UP QUESTIONS

Answers will vary. Discuss in pairs or as a group. You could also assign these questions for homework. Tell your students to have a phone or text-based chat.

B. VOCABULARY PREVIEW

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. e | 3. h | 5. c | 7. i | 9. g |
| 2. f | 4. a | 6. b | 8. j | 10. d |

Reading (and/or Listening)

Read individually, in small groups, or as a class. You can also play the listening as your students read along. A gap-fill version of the reading is available on page 5. Help your students with vocabulary and expressions that they are unfamiliar with.

Comprehension

1. The tobacco industry is compared to the sugar industry in this reading because it used tactics to reduce consumers' health concerns.
2. The reading says candy companies have funded research efforts to reduce consumers' concerns about the health hazards of sugar.
3. According to this reading, parents contribute to childhood obesity by rewarding their kids with sugary treats.
4. Some governments want to put a sales tax on sugary beverages in order to reduce diabetes and obesity in their nation's population.
5. Answers will vary.

(continued on the next page...)

Answer Key cont.

Vocabulary Review

A. CHUNKING

Answers will vary for sentences.

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. sugar craving | 4. tooth decay |
| 2. childhood obesity | 5. cut back on |
| 3. behind the scenes | 6. health professional |

B. ODD ONE OUT

1. c 2. d 3. a 4. b 5. a 6. d

Challenge your learners to create their own “Odd One Out” exercise using the odd words. Have them challenge a classmate. (They should mix up the order to make it more challenging.)

Discussion

Answers will vary.

Critical Thinking

Answers will vary.

Listening

1. whether or not
2. to blame, guidelines
3. behind-the-scene, advertisers
4. obesity, cut back, giving up

SPELLING NOTE:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the word *Favorite*. Other English-speaking countries spell it this way: *Favourite*. Make it a challenge for your students to find this word in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spelling.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

1. Teach the following “sugar” expressions: sweet tooth, sugar fix, sugar rush, sugar craving, sugarcoat, sugar-free, short and sweet.
2. Have students design warning ads for candy or sweetened beverages. Search online for images of tobacco warnings for inspiration. Discuss whether or not doing this activity caused your students to decide to reduce their sugar intake.