

UNIT 1 Strange & Unusual

Reading 1

American Superstitions

American Superstitions

Every culture has superstitions. Some people believe them more than others. Our modern technological society puts a high value on rationality, but superstitions can still hold a powerful influence. Most people seem to outgrow them. But how many people continue to believe (or at least act like they believe) superstitions as adults?

A survey conducted for the journal *American Demographics* by the research firm Market Facts found some surprising results. In the survey, people were asked how superstitious they were. Ten common superstitions were listed. Five of them related to good luck and five to bad luck. Respondents were then asked to check the ones they believed and how strongly. Of the superstitions in the list, good-luck superstitions were more widely held. The top good-luck superstitions that most people believed “very much” were picking four-leaf clovers (seventy-nine percent), knocking on wood (seventy-two percent), picking up pennies (seventy percent), and crossing fingers for luck (fifty-nine percent). Of the bad-luck superstitions, the most common belief was that breaking a mirror brought bad luck (eighty-two percent). Other bad-luck superstitions listed in the survey included seeing black cats, walking under ladders, a groom seeing the bride before the wedding, and doing anything on Friday the 13th.

Even though most Americans consider superstitions nothing more than ridiculous myths, forty-four percent of the people surveyed still admitted they were superstitious. There were other seemingly contradictory results. Among the fifty-six percent who did not describe themselves as superstitious, belief in “optimistic” superstition was still fairly common. For example, twelve percent of those who said they were not really superstitious confessed to knocking on wood for good luck. And nine percent confessed they would pick up a penny on the street for good luck. Likewise, nine percent of “non-believers” also said they would pick a four-leaf clover for luck if they found one. And some still believed in kissing under the mistletoe for luck.

Of the forty-four percent of Americans who admit their superstitious beliefs, sixty-five percent said they were “only a little” superstitious. Twenty-eight percent were “somewhat” superstitious, and eight percent were “very” superstitious. Among this last group of believers, some interesting differences appeared when the men and women were considered separately. In the survey, women comprised sixty percent of the entire superstitious group, seeming to indicate that women tend to be more superstitious than men. However, more than half (sixty-four percent) of the “very” superstitious believers were male.

Additionally, there were significant differences in age between the believers and the non-believers. In the survey, more young people admitted their superstitious nature than older people. For people between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four, sixty-four percent claimed to be at least a little superstitious. But for seniors sixty-five and older, only thirty percent admitted to believing in any superstitions.

It might be expected that people with more education would be less superstitious, but results from the survey indicated almost equal numbers of believers among those with and without college degrees. Of those survey respondents whose education stopped at high school, forty-two percent reported being at least a little superstitious. For those with a college education, forty-seven percent claimed the same minimal level of belief.

These results may seem puzzling, but perhaps they are to be expected. Whether they are true believers or not, most people would say there’s no harm in doing something like knocking on wood or crossing one’s fingers to increase the chances of a positive outcome. After all, who couldn’t use a little extra luck?

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Scared of Friday the 13th

The year 2015 was a very bad one for people who believe that Friday the 13th is an especially unlucky day. In 2015, three months had a Friday that fell on the 13th of the month—February, March, and November. That is actually the most times that the 13th can possibly fall on a Friday.

The belief that Friday and the number thirteen are both unlucky possibly goes back to the time of Jesus's death. At the Last Supper, Jesus gathered his twelve followers for a special meal, but including himself, there were a total of thirteen people at the table. One of those followers later betrayed Jesus and turned him over to be killed—on a Friday. Today, superstitions about the number thirteen continue to worry people. As a result, most American skyscrapers do not have a 13th floor, and many airplanes lack a 13th row. When the number is combined with unlucky Friday, some people get doubly nervous.

When asked, only thirteen percent of Americans admit they believe that Friday the 13th is an unlucky day, but the percentage is much higher among young people. About thirty percent of Americans between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four say they generally try to be a little more careful on a Friday falling on the 13th. In Britain, a quarter of survey respondents said they make changes to their normal routine on that day. One in ten said they avoid travel, and one in twenty refuse to leave their homes!

Reading 2

Bigfoot

Bigfoot

Native American and Canadian tribes have passed down stories for thousands of years about giant ape-men living in the forests of the western United States and Canada. They called these creatures Bigfoot, Sasquatch, or Mountain Devils. Regardless of the name, the descriptions of these animals are usually the same. Bigfoot is described as being very tall—well over two meters. It is covered in thick, dark hair and usually emits a bad odor. Its body is usually very muscular and ape-like, yet it walks upright and has a face more similar to that of humans than that of apes. For the most part, this creature appears not to be violent or aggressive. Bigfoot sightings are usually of lone, or single, creatures, but there have been periodic reports of people seeing groups or families of Bigfoot. People in other countries also tell stories of similar ape-men. In the Himalayas, a mountain range in Nepal, people call these creatures Yeti or Abominable Snowmen. Some Africans call them Nandi bears, and the Chinese tell stories of the Gin-Sung, or “Bearman.”

Though sightings have been reported for centuries, is there any scientific evidence for the existence of these creatures? Some say yes, and others say no. Dr. Grover Krantz, a physical anthropologist at the University of Oregon who died in 2002, believed that Bigfoot may be a type of creature known as Gigantopithecus. The Gigantopithecus are a group of apes that lived in Asia—maybe as recently as 100,000 years ago—but are now believed to be extinct. They had many physical similarities to the legendary Bigfoot. Dr. Krantz argued that these animals may have actually migrated from Asia and settled in the heavily wooded area of the US Pacific Northwest, where food was plentiful.

Is it possible that creatures like these could have survived for so many years, unknown to humans? Cryptozoologists are researchers that study mysterious creatures whose existence has not been proven. These researchers compare the case of Bigfoot to that of the coelacanth. The coelacanth is a type of fish that was believed to have become extinct over seventy million years ago but then was discovered to be still living off the coast of South Africa. Cryptozoologists suggest that the animals that we now call Bigfoot have been able to survive by living in habitats where people, until recently, have seldom gone.

There are, however, some questions that cryptozoologists have been unable to answer, which is why their ideas remain on the fringe of science. For example, why have no dead Bigfoot specimens ever been discovered? And where is the physical proof of their existence? Bigfoot researchers point out that it is unusual to find the dead remains of any

animal in the forest. Most of the time, they say, other animals eat the remains soon after death; this may be the case for Bigfoot, too. Many skeptics, however, say that the videos and photographs of Bigfoot are really pictures of people wearing ape costumes. They also believe that the Bigfoot footprints are really the footprints of a bear, or footprints made by tricksters trying to fool scientists.

It is possible that we may never know the truth about these creatures. If they have avoided being seen for thousands of years, then maybe they will stay hidden for another several thousand. Or it may be that as we humans go deeper and deeper into the forests of Northwest America and Canada, we may finally come face-to-face with the elusive Bigfoot.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

The Death of Bigfoot?

Is Bigfoot dead? The answer is yes, according to the family of Ray L. Wallace, who died November 26, 2002, in Seattle, Washington. After the death of his father, Michael Wallace told a story that surprised many people who had been trying to solve the Bigfoot mystery. He claimed that his father had made up the idea of a Bigfoot creature; though he did not invent the name “Bigfoot,” he developed it as a practical joke to make money. According to Michael, Ray Wallace asked a friend to make a pair of sixteen-inch (40 cm) feet out of wood. Wallace then used them to make fake Bigfoot footprints around the woods near his house. Wallace would use these footprints to support the stories about Bigfoot that he told to newspapers. Some of these stories were quite strange.

He once told a newspaper reporter, “[Bigfoot] creatures are people; they speak a language.” Wallace tried to make money from these stories. He made tape recordings of strange sounds that he said were “Bigfoot conversations” and sold the tapes to tourists along with Bigfoot photos, posters, and pieces of animal hair that he said came from Bigfoot.

Though his family claims that Bigfoot died with Ray Wallace, others are not so sure. Scientist Jeff Meldrum, a professor at Idaho State University, does not believe that Bigfoot is imaginary. Professor Meldrum claims to have copies of over forty footprints that he says belong to a very large, unknown creature, which he believes is the real Bigfoot.

UNIT 2 Computers & Technology

Reading 1

The History of the Internet

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Today's young adults are among the first ever born into a world in which internet use is a normal part of everyday life. Over 4.6 billion people around the world are now online. The internet is a powerful tool for information, business, and communication.

The elementary concept of the internet emerged in the early 1960s. It began as a military research network and was designed to be decentralized, or spread out over many locations. Thus, if one location was attacked, the military could make transmissions from another location. The first small network went online in 1969 and connected four universities in the US.

This network was very successful from the beginning. Scientists could now share information about their research. In 1972, email was invented and quickly became the internet's most popular application. By the end of that year, the network connected many universities and government research centers. The general public became aware of the network in the late 1970s when a new user interface allowed anyone to get online. People from all over the world joined online groups to talk about thousands of different subjects.

The term "internet" was used for the first time in 1982. New technology had created a common language for the computers on the network. The internet was now recognized as an international network. This was also the time when privacy and security started becoming important issues. Hackers, crackers, and viruses began to appear.

In 1990, the original military network went offline, and a year later, the World Wide Web was born. The World Wide Web is an information network that spans the globe, allowing users to access and navigate the internet. With the introduction of the Web, the development of the internet accelerated at a rapid pace. The source code for the Web was released to the public in 1991, allowing programmers to encode words, pictures, and sounds on Web pages.

In the early 1990s, the first search engine, Gopher, and the first Web browser, Mosaic, were developed, allowing easier and simpler access to the Web. Traffic on the internet saw exponential increases, with an annual growth rate of about 340,000 percent.

At the end of the 1990s, Internet2 was born. Internet2 used fiber-optic cables to link together a consortium of hundreds of high-speed networks around the world. Instead of connecting to the internet only through telephone lines, people could now connect in a wide variety of ways, including by satellite. These new methods had more data-carrying capacity, or bandwidth, than telephone lines did, making the internet faster and able to convey much more information. People could watch TV shows and movies online for the first time.

Another major change occurred in the 1990s: people no longer needed computers to access the internet. The Nokia 9000 Communicator, released in 1996, became the first mobile phone with internet connectivity. By 2008, more internet-connected devices were mobile phones than computers, and in 2010, the first-generation iPad added tablets to the mix. Also, information increasingly did not need to be stored on computer hard drives. Instead, it is stored on internet servers around the world, available to download anytime, anywhere. Keeping your information in "the cloud" means that you can always access it, even if your devices are lost, stolen, or destroyed.

The internet will only continue to grow. As of 2021, nearly half of the people on Earth have smartphones, and two-thirds own some kind of mobile device. Experts expect more and more connectivity through more and more types of devices. What are your predictions for the future of the internet?

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Freedom Online

Since the invention of the internet, the extent to which governments should control what can be viewed online has been widely debated. In the early 1990s, many advocates of the internet believed it should be a space free from government control. They argued that individuals should be able to say and do whatever they wanted online.

As more and more of the world's population goes online, however, attitudes have begun to change. Many still believe that freedom of speech on the internet should be protected. However, most now accept that complete freedom from government oversight is unrealistic. Even in countries where freedom of speech is a legal right, governments and courts have long had powers to regulate content in the print and broadcast media—especially in regards to individuals' rights not to be lied about or discriminated against. Many people now want to see such rules more strictly enforced online as well—for both content produced by organizations and individuals.

Some governments control the internet even more tightly. There is a growing list of countries where governments block any content that they believe could be politically or socially damaging. Many in those countries argue that it is a government's duty to protect its citizens in every aspect of their lives, including online.

As the role of the internet in society continues to develop, the limits of government control remain to be seen. What is clear, however, is that the internet has developed very differently than those early internet enthusiasts envisaged.

Reading 2

Gamers: Image and Reality

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Video games have come a long way since they first emerged as a niche pastime in the 1970s. In 2020, the global video-game market was worth approximately \$150 to \$160 billion, and it is predicted to continue growing at a rapid pace. Much of this growth is credited to new software and the increasing affordability of mobile devices. According to the Entertainment Software Association (ESA), three out of every four US households include someone who plays video games. Yet, despite the popularity of gaming, there are many negative stereotypes attached to being a gamer. This raises the question: how do the stereotypes compare to reality?

Gamers are often portrayed negatively in the media. This can be seen in shows such as *The Big Bang Theory*, where the game-obsessed lead characters are noticeably lacking in social skills. A common stereotype is that gaming is an activity for boys and young men who lack the energy and motivation to do anything constructive. This leads many people to believe that gamers are unhealthy and unlikely to be productive because they devote little time to exercise, creative hobbies, and schoolwork. It also leads to fears that young gamers won't be able to hold jobs when they leave school.

As with any group, there are people who fit the stereotypes. However, studies have found that video game players are far more diverse than we are led to believe. The ESA found in 2018 that gamers primarily consisted of adults, not children. They also found that forty-six percent of gamers were women. Gamers were also not as lazy as some assumed. US unemployment, particularly among young adults in their twenties, steadily declined between 2010 and 2020. Additionally, fifty-six percent of gamers reported that they regularly participated in creative activities, such as drawing, singing, and writing. Lastly, regarding health, a study at the University of Wurzburg found that only one percent of adult gamers' health problems could be directly linked to gaming and that no significant link between games and poor health among children and teenagers existed.

The most serious charge against gamers, however, comes from the belief that games contribute to violence. High-profile

crimes, such as the Sandy Hook shootings in the US, have been linked to violent games. Yet, there is no solid evidence connecting video-game violence with real-world violence. In 2020, the American Psychological Association found that violent video games did increase “aggression.” However, the study pointed out that aggression is not the same as violence. Looking at US crime statistics, researchers also found that violent crime, particularly among the young, has decreased since the early 1990s. Additionally, the incidence of violent crime in other countries where violent video games are popular is lower than in the US.

If we look past the stereotypes, we can find that gaming has some positive effects. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic led to mass quarantines. People turned to games and social media to relieve their boredom. Games such as *Animal Crossing: New Horizons* became popular topics of social discussion. Rishi Chadha, global head of gaming partnerships at Twitter, noticed the game’s impact by tracking conversation volume on Twitter. He found that conversation about the game had grown by over 1,000 percent since its launch, and the number of people tweeting about the game had increased by over 400 percent. That’s more than thirty-eight million tweets!

It’s easy to find examples that support negative stereotypes about gamers. But contemporary research shows gamers are far more complex and diverse than the stereotypes would suggest. Perhaps it’s time to reevaluate our image of gamers to better match reality.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Are Gamers Good Students?

For decades parents have complained that video games distract children from their schoolwork and harm their academic performance. But is there any evidence that this is actually true? Scientists have conducted a number of studies that should help lay concerned parents’ fears to rest.

One common theory is that gamers devote less time to academic activities than non-gamers. Therefore, their academic performance is likely to be worse than that of non-gamers. Studies that tested this idea found that gamers did spend less time on their homework than non-gamers. However, they also found that the academic performance of the two groups was similar. Some researchers even think that games can actually improve academic performance. These researchers suggest that video games can improve students’ visual awareness, memory, and attention capacity, and can train students to think critically.

Recent studies have strengthened the argument that games have little negative effect on academic performance. A team of German researchers conducted a study of students across their entire school career. As a part of the study, they monitored their video game usage. Approximately seventy percent of the students in the study played video games occasionally. Of them, twenty percent spent two or more hours daily playing games. The team concluded that students who played games for long periods of time did get worse grades overall. Yet when tested on their understanding of core math and language concepts, heavy gamers performed well, suggesting that gaming has no significant effect on overall learning.

It seems that, within reason, gaming does not harm students’ academic potential. They just need to remember to put their controllers aside from time to time.

UNIT 3 Health & Medicine

Reading 1

Body Mass and Weight

Body Mass and Weight

To be obese means to have too much fat on the body. Obese people are not just overweight—they are so overweight that they are likely to develop health problems. The precise cause of the recent rise in obesity is not clear, but it is certain that obesity is a problem in most countries. A recent study estimated that about forty-two percent of people in the US are obese. People need to understand what obesity is and how to tell if they themselves are obese so that they can change their condition.

An obese person does not always look extremely fat. Even people who seem only slightly overweight can be diagnosed as obese. If you have a certain percentage of fat on your body, then your health might be in danger. This is usually thought to be about forty percent of the body's total composition.

Most people still rely on just their weight measurement to tell if they are overweight or obese, but there are problems with this method. There are different recommended weights for different ages, and weight alone says nothing about a person's percentage of body fat, which is most important. Directly figuring out body fat percentage can be quite difficult. For example, one method requires you to squeeze the fat on the back of your arm, measure its thickness, and then plug this number into a formula. However, this is only a crude estimate; a truly accurate measurement of body fat percentage requires an X-ray.

Another popular method of gauging whether someone is obese is the Body Mass Index (BMI). BMI is a person's weight in kilograms divided by the square of his or her height in meters. A normal BMI for a healthy adult is generally between twenty and twenty-five.

A BMI of thirty or more means a person is obese. Many experts feel that BMI is a reliable way to determine if a person's weight is unhealthy, while others feel that BMI is too general to be really useful. The numbers come from comparisons of large groups of people. BMI is not related to an individual's body composition, so it says nothing about a person's actual percentage of body fat.

People have different body types, which can make BMI unreliable. For instance, athletes usually have more muscle mass than other people, and muscle weighs more than fat. Therefore, an athlete may have a high BMI, but this does not mean they are not healthy. Some people have higher bone density than others, which also increases their weight. In some cases, those who have very low body fat and are also not muscular can have a BMI that is too high. BMI is also unreliable for children and the elderly, so even supporters of BMI think that it should not be used for people under eighteen or over seventy years old.

Despite these criticisms, there are strong positive aspects of BMI. The main one is that it is very simple. The formula can be used easily and does not take special knowledge or equipment—just a scale, along with a pencil and paper or a calculator. Though BMI is a general measurement, it still gives useful information and can help identify when there might be a problem. Furthermore, some studies have shown that people with higher BMI numbers have a higher risk of health problems. It takes only a minute to get a BMI number, but the results can be very important to a person's life.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Obesity and Health

It is important to understand that obesity is not just an uncomfortable condition of the body. Obesity can cause serious health problems. Many people are not aware of these problems, so they do not try to prevent the problems before they appear. This is unfortunate since prevention is possible, though difficult.

One of the worst health problems caused by obesity is Type 2 diabetes. One study found that almost ninety percent of people with Type 2 diabetes are either overweight or obese. People with diabetes have insulin resistance, which means that their bodies do not use insulin properly. Insulin helps the body to absorb, or take in, sugar. If the body cannot absorb sugar, several bad things can result, including seizures (losing control of the body) or falling into a coma.

A number of other problems related to obesity have also been found. Obesity can cause heart disease, which is when the vessels that deliver blood to the heart become blocked. This makes it more likely that such people will suffer from heart attacks, which take place when the heart loses blood supply and cannot pump properly. Furthermore, obesity causes problems with breathing, especially when sleeping. Obese people are also at high risk for arthritis as well as certain kinds of cancers.

All of these problems, and others, can be prevented. Of course, losing weight is very difficult, and changing one's lifestyle is hard and often painful. Even so, the results of obesity are much worse.

Reading 2

Studying Headaches

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Headaches are a big problem. Each year, millions of people suffer from severe headaches that affect their enjoyment of life, not to mention their productivity at work. In fact, according to one estimate, headaches cost individuals and businesses more than \$50 billion each year! This is one of the reasons research into headaches has become a worldwide effort.

Although he did not know much about how headaches work, Hippocrates was the first doctor to find a way to treat them. By 400 BCE, Hippocrates had discovered that the bark from willow trees⁴ was useful in treating pain. He made a white powder from the tree's bark and gave it to his patients.

Hippocrates did not know it, but he was actually prescribing a natural chemical in willow bark called salicin. When a person eats salicin, the chemical is changed inside his or her body into salicylic acid. It turns out that salicylic acid is good for stopping pain, including headache pain, but it is bad for a person's stomach. In the 1800s, a chemist in Germany slightly changed the acid's form to make it easier for people to take. This new form of the chemical was called acetylsalicylic acid, now commonly known as aspirin.

Aspirin was used throughout most of the 1900s to treat headaches, but doctors had little idea about what really caused headaches. When doctors can diagnose the cause of a disease, they can find better ways to treat it. Therefore, as medical technology developed, doctors began to use it to learn more about the human brain and about headaches.

Currently, doctors classify headaches into two general types: primary and secondary. A primary headache is a condition suffered as only the headache itself. On the other hand, a secondary headache is one caused by another physiological condition, such as an infection or a tumor.

For primary headaches, doctors have determined three possible causes. One kind of primary headache is caused by stress. Doctors usually call these tension headaches, and they are characteristically felt on both sides of the head as a dull, steady pain.

Another kind of primary headache is the migraine headache. Exactly what causes these headaches is not well understood, but many experts believe it could be abnormal brain activity causing changes in the brain's chemistry and blood flow. For many people, migraines are triggered by certain stimuli, such as poor sleep or particular foods or smells. A sufferer usually feels intense pain on one side of the head and becomes sensitive to light and noise. If the migraine is severe, the sufferer may vomit repeatedly.

The third kind of primary headache is known as the cluster headache. Cluster headaches typically occur around the same time each day for weeks or months at a time. The person suffering from this kind of headache usually feels pain on one side of her or his head, and the pain is centered around one of the eyes. Doctors do not know much at present about cluster headaches, but they seem to be more common among men and could be related to alcohol or other things that affect a person's blood flow.

Using computers and more advanced medical equipment, doctors continue to learn more about what happens in the brain before and during headaches. Especially in the case of migraines, some doctors believe they have found the part of the brain that sets off the reaction for severe attacks. With these insights into brain processes, doctors hope new ways will be discovered to stop headaches before they begin.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Fighting Migraines

Aspirin works well for fighting minor headaches, but it might not be the best choice for dealing with migraines. Doctors have found that after a migraine sufferer is treated with aspirin, the person's next migraine attack may be even worse. Therefore, experts have been searching for other ways to treat these headaches.

For example, doctors have learned that certain cells in parts of the brain release proteins during a migraine attack. By using a drug that acts like the natural chemical serotonin in the brain, they can stop the cells from releasing those proteins. This has the effect of blocking the migraine.

But that is only one kind of medicine doctors have found useful in fighting migraines. It also turns out that certain anti-depressant drugs work well to relieve migraines. And surprisingly, some migraine sufferers claim Botox has proven helpful for them. (Botox is a chemical injected into the face for the purpose of reducing wrinkles.)

Not all migraine sufferers turn to medicine for help with their problem. Others use alternative remedies. Many people use yoga or meditation to relieve stress and reduce the number of migraines they suffer. And in some cases, people know that certain foods or fluorescent lights trigger their migraines. These people simply try to avoid the things that set off their migraine attacks.

UNIT 4 Social Issues

Reading 1

Education Abroad: Should I Stay or Should I Go?

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In some parts of the world, studying abroad is believed to be the key to a successful career—and even a happy life. Parents rightly think that being culturally flexible and bilingual (especially in English) will be an advantage. But there are also negative aspects to an international education.

A relatively small number of adolescents find themselves studying at boarding schools abroad. With big reputations, excellent facilities, and small class sizes, schools like these provide a desirable product. Some boarding schools almost guarantee entrance to elite colleges in English-speaking countries. These schools can be a challenging experience, and students often suffer from homesickness. Parents see the difficulties of exposure to a new society as a worthwhile trade-off. However, boarding schools are often exclusive communities; they rarely reflect the population of the country as a whole. Neither do they come cheap; in the UK, schools like Eton and Harrow can cost up to \$58,000 per year.

It is far more common for undergraduates to study at universities abroad. According to educationdata.org, more than one million foreign students came to US universities in 2019. Statistically, students from China were the highest in number, with 369,548 arriving to study in the US, while those arriving from India represented the second largest group, with 202,014 students. Altogether, foreign students contributed close to \$44 billion to the US economy.

Living in diverse cities, foreign university students experience the societies of the countries they go to more fully. This provides other less obvious benefits to their education. While they can also feel lonely, they are more likely to become independent, confident, and self-motivated. Until recently, such students often found employment easily upon returning to their home countries. In African nations, sixty-five percent of companies' CEOs studied abroad. In Asian countries, the figure is lower, but still significant at twenty-nine percent.

However, as a growing percentage of young people attend university, the benefits of an undergraduate education abroad are becoming less obvious. Many employers now expect applicants to have a master's or even a PhD. And although many of the top jobs will continue to go to those who graduated abroad, at a typical cost of \$40,000 a year, getting there can seem increasingly risky. Many students now find themselves stuck with large amounts of debt and the stress of knowing they won't be able to pay it off for many years.

Another challenge students face is the unfamiliar atmosphere and curriculum at foreign universities. In 2017, Chinese students at several Australian universities protested about how aspects of Chinese politics were being taught. In light of this, it would appear that the Western education students pay so much for is not always easy to adapt to.

Often, though, students who leave to study abroad do not return home, an effect called "brain drain." This means that the skills students develop are used in host countries rather than at home. By 2006, Indians had started 13.4 percent of all tech start-ups in California's Silicon Valley. The Indian government has tried to encourage more graduates to return home. This way, they can benefit the Indian rather than the US economy.

Worldwide, domestic education remains the most popular and practical way to learn. It is cheaper than international education, helps build communities, and prepares students for life in the country in which they will most likely live and work. On the other hand, international education helps to expand students' minds. It is an exciting way to learn and can

provide a better chance of finding a good job. It would seem that students have a lot to consider when deciding whether to stay or to go.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

India: Brain Drain or Brain Gain?

In India, “brain drain” was first identified in the 1960s as scientists and technology developers began to move abroad to advance their careers. This had a damaging effect on the Indian economy. To address this, the Indian government eventually introduced taxes on Indians living and working abroad. Even so, through the 1990s and 2000s, brain drain remained a problem.

Now, though, it seems the problem has been reduced. This is perhaps the result of government investment in education; the country now has more than 51,000 higher-education institutions for students to choose from. Pre-COVID, though, huge numbers of Indian students still chose an international education.

So perhaps a bigger factor in India’s “brain gain” is that students who do study abroad are now returning home once qualified. This is connected to shifts in the global economy. Companies in countries like the US have now begun to reach capacity; job opportunities are no longer so easy to come by. At the same time, tech companies from the US and Europe have begun to invest in India.

Looking ahead, India’s young scientists and tech inventors may not have to choose at all. In 2020, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced laws that would allow foreign universities to set up campuses in India itself. The world’s top one hundred universities, Modi stated, would be welcome to set up shop in the country. Recent difficulties with foreign travel mean it is possible that many institutions will take up his offer.

Reading 2

Closed Doors: Education under COVID-19

Closed Doors: Education under COVID-19

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck in early 2020, politicians faced many difficult choices. One of their hardest decisions was whether or not to close schools; it soon became apparent that they had no choice. According to the UN, at the peak of the pandemic that year, an estimated 1.6 billion children were affected by school closures.

Some families found that homeschooling was a useful substitute for attending school in person. Parents who worked in white-collar office jobs were often able to work from home. This meant they could homeschool their children daily and maintain some educational continuity. Some parents said they appreciated the chance to spend more time with their children and be involved with their education. While we cannot generalize, it is likely that these parents had a fairly high level of education and thus were able to tutor their children to a relatively high standard.

For parents who worked in blue-collar (manual) occupations, homeschooling was often not feasible. It is impossible for bus drivers or factory, construction, and healthcare workers to work from home. Instead, many were forced to continue going out to work and were therefore unable to homeschool their children. In fact, they were often left with the challenge of finding someone to care for their children during the day. In countries like the UK, some blue-collar employees were identified as “key workers,” and their children were allowed to attend school as part of small classes.

Remote learning also reduced some effects of school closures. Many teachers used programs like Zoom or Google Classroom to teach and monitor their pupils’ progress. Features on these programs allowed teachers to set tasks, share books and films, and give students advice. But if parents were not present, it was often difficult to ensure that

work was being done. For some children, it was not only working parents that made remote learning less feasible. Many did not have access to computers at all or lacked the money to buy essential books. In some countries, under normal conditions, public libraries provide these for free, but unfortunately, libraries were also closed due to the virus.

School closures had some negative consequences for all students. Schools are not only centers for formal education but are also crucial to behavioral development; they are where we learn to interact, socialize, and share. At school, we form relationships that can define our lives for years to come. During the pandemic, those with access to computers or smartphones could use social media to replace some of these interactions. But, again, this did not include all students. Also, teachers are trained professionals; all children benefit from exposure to the personal guidance they give; without it, any child is at risk of developing more slowly. On top of this, many less-fortunate children rely on free school meals.

While at home, many were not able to eat well, or eat enough. Without sufficient nutrition, their physical and intellectual development may have suffered even more. While life was difficult enough for many families during school closures, it may take years to see the long-term effects. Already at an innate disadvantage, many poorer children may have fallen further behind. This will reduce their chances of attending university and getting well-paid jobs, so the cycle of disadvantage will continue. Some parents were able to create a fairly smooth and short path through the COVID-19 pandemic. For others, the journey is likely to be much rougher—and far longer.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Helping Hands

The COVID-19 pandemic closed schools all over the world. While some families were better equipped to cope with the resulting problems, others struggled. To try and help, individuals and communities responded in a variety of ways.

England and Manchester United soccer player Marcus Rashford knows how important free school lunches are. Although now a successful athlete, he relied on them as a child. So he used his public profile and huge number of Twitter followers to draw attention to the problem. The British government responded by agreeing to give free meals to some students for a brief period. Rashford asked that they extend the program to cover the period of the pandemic. The government refused, but many food companies and restaurants agreed to provide food to less-wealthy children for free. Rashford promised to continue his mission to provide free lunches to 1.4 million of the UK's poorest children.

Meanwhile, students at Stanford University acted to address the fact that eleven million children in the US did not have access to a laptop or computer; for these children, remote learning was impossible. So Margot Bellon and Isabel Wang founded the non-profit organization Bridging Tech. They used a nationwide network of volunteers to collect used, unwanted laptops and deliver them to children who needed them. During COVID-19, this allowed less-wealthy children to participate fully in remote learning and online study. The pair chose the name because they aim to bridge the “digital divide” between rich and poor, a gap that the COVID-19 pandemic only widened.

UNIT 5 Environmental Issues

Reading 1

Humans and the Natural World

Humans and the Natural World

Humans encroach further on nature with every passing year. Between 1996 and 2016, the Earth lost an area of forest larger than South Africa. Over the past five hundred years, almost nine hundred species have become extinct. Even now, twenty-five percent of mammals and 12.5 percent of birds are at high risk of extinction. This does not just have a negative impact on flora and fauna—it affects humans too.

Agriculture can have a particularly negative effect on the natural world because modern intensive farming creates unhealthy monocultures. These are large areas of land which are used to grow just one crop, and as such, they lack biodiversity. Often, these areas are also treated with pesticides and herbicides. These chemicals kill off any remaining species which might have survived in these artificial landscapes. A lack of biodiversity can have consequences for humans. For example, the world's bumblebee population has shrunk by as much as ninety-three percent in the last twenty years. Humans rely on bumblebees to spread pollen and produce fruit and vegetables.

Meat farming also has a huge impact on landscapes. Since 1950, the Amazonian rainforest alone has been reduced in size by seventeen percent; we call this deforestation. Much of it has been to create grazing land for cattle. Forested areas help to absorb carbon, and we are losing them just as our cars, airplanes, factories, and power stations produce more carbon than ever before. This results in global warming, which threatens wildlife in untouched environments such as Antarctica. At the same time, it puts many towns and cities at risk of flooding as sea levels rise.

Humans also encroach on nature through direct physical contact with animals. Factory farming forces animals like cows, pigs, and chickens to live tightly packed together. This is not only deeply unpleasant for the animals, but it also carries a risk for humans. Epidemiology suggests that in these conditions, new viruses are highly likely to develop. Close human contact with these animals can then lead to the transmission of diseases such as bird flu, which is easily passed from farmed chickens to humans.

But the greatest risks come from increased contact with wild animals, which often occurs as cities expand and wild habitats are absorbed. Rats, monkeys, and bats live among humans and are responsible for hosting as many as seventy-five percent of all viruses. Rats carry hantavirus leptospirosis, and many other diseases; monkeys carry B virus, yellow fever, and rabies. Bats, meanwhile, have been linked to the SARS and Ebola viruses, among others.

In many developing countries, rather than trying to avoid contact with wild animals, people actively hunt for them. Traders at wildlife markets sell wild animals, or bushmeat, for food. Often, these markets are viewed as traditional, and bushmeat is believed to have positive effects on human health. In many cases, the animals sold at wildlife markets are endangered species; in fact, their rarity is often why they are valuable and in demand.

There are now several campaigns to end the selling of bushmeat at wildlife markets. However, these may cause cultural tensions between developed and developing nations. Other differences could also arise over how to battle encroachment. Developed countries are financially able to protect animals; they can set aside land as wildlife reserves because their populations are growing less quickly, or even decreasing. In reality, though, they now rely on developing countries for farming and manufacturing, leading to more encroachment in these nations. Clearly, it's time for all nations to unify in their efforts to address the human impact on nature.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Peter Singer and *Animal Liberation*

In 1975, the Australian philosopher Peter Singer wrote a revolutionary book, *Animal Liberation*. When the book first appeared, Singer's ideas were seen as strange, fringe beliefs. Today, however, many of Singer's ideas have been accepted by individuals and even governments.

Singer was initially influenced by philosopher Jeremy Bentham, who was born in England in 1748. Bentham was one of the first to write about the rights of animals. The question, Bentham argued, was not if animals could think or if they could talk, but rather if they could suffer.

This argument convinced Singer that humans needed to change the way they treated animals through deforestation, factory farming, animal testing, zoos, and even the way we buy and sell them as pets. In his book, Singer accepted that animal rights and human rights were different. He admitted that if some scientific testing on an animal like a mouse could save millions of lives, then it might be worth it.

However, many of the ways we use animals, Singer argued, were not actually helpful to humans at all. In fact, Singer predicted that the number and variety of diseases would grow as human contact with animals increased. He also suggested that deforestation for cattle farming would have a negative impact on the entire planet. Singer's book argued that what is good for animals is usually good for humans, too. Humans should not think of "the natural world," Singer suggested, as separate from themselves.

Reading 2

The Geopolitics of Climate Change

The Geopolitics of Climate Change

Broadly speaking, national governments are conscious of their responsibility to act on climate change. Since 2008, natural disasters have forced an average of twenty-eight million people to leave their homes each year. Meanwhile, just as demand for food is growing, farms are regularly threatened with floods or droughts. Because of this, many governments believe action needs to be taken at a higher, global level.

So in 2015, 197 countries made an agreement at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris. The Paris Agreement asked countries to work together to limit global warming to an increase of no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius and to achieve a carbon-neutral world by 2050. The industrialized nations that joined fully included China, the US, and all the member states of the EU. At the time, Iran, Iraq, Libya, and the eleven other members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) signed the agreement, but did not make it law in their countries. These countries' economies rely very heavily on selling oil. The developed countries that did make it law agreed to share finances and technology with each other and to support developing countries, which might struggle to act alone.

However, in 2017, the US withdrew from the agreement as some in the country believed it was unfair. They thought it allowed developing countries to industrialize more than the US and that the US was paying for them to do so. The US once had large car and steel industries, but these were heavily reduced in size from the 1980s onwards, causing high unemployment in some areas. Many wanted to bring these industries back to life, and some thought that membership in the Paris Agreement would prevent this from happening.

Even with this reduction in manufacturing, in 2020, the US was responsible for fifteen percent of the carbon created across the world—despite having only four percent of the global population. Among other things, this was caused by

power stations burning fossil fuels and by extensive use of cars and airplanes. Some world leaders criticized the US for its position, and in 2021 it joined the Paris Agreement again.

The only country responsible for producing more carbon than the US is China. In 2020, the Asian superpower contributed twenty-eight percent of global carbon emissions. Even so, it remains a member of the Paris Agreement. While it does burn huge amounts of fossil fuels, China is also investing record amounts in renewable energy sources like wind, solar, hydroelectric, and tidal power. A 2020 directive by its government saw \$360 million invested and thirteen million jobs created in the sector.

These investments not only suggest that China cares about climate change; they are also a means of promoting China globally. When the US withdrew from the agreement, China was quick to affirm its commitment because it showed the world that China was progressive. This is likely to encourage foreign investment. China also hopes that being energy self-sufficient will reduce its reliance on other countries and the disagreements this causes. As things stand, oil-producing countries set prices and control resources. And, in the past, international disputes over oil have often led to conflict.

However, renewable energy resources will likely also cause conflict. The rare-earth minerals required to produce them are mostly found in less developed, less powerful nations. Lithium batteries contain graphite, of which Mozambique is the world's second-biggest producer. Solar panels require cobalt, which is mostly found in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Competition for these minerals, and for influence in the countries where they are produced, is bound to increase. Agreements on climate cannot end the geopolitics of energy, only change its rules.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

The Century of Oil

As countries move away from oil to renewable energy sources, international relations will also change greatly. For over a century, oil has been a cause of tensions and conflicts around the world, and controlling oil has also been a way to keep or take power.

Used in industrialized countries from the late 1800s, oil took on a new importance with the start of World War I (WWI). For the first time, armies used vehicles such as tanks and submarines, which required large amounts of oil-based fuel. The Allied Powers had access to around seventy percent of the world's oil: Russia had large oil fields, and the British Navy controlled many of the routes in and out of the oil-producing Middle East. The US also contributed oil from its Texan wells.

On the opposite side, Germany and Austria-Hungary had few domestic oil reserves and relied heavily on imports from their allies in the Middle East. This meant a battle for control of the region. Germany also attacked US ships as they delivered oil and other supplies to the Allies. This, in turn, led to the US entering the war and contributing to the Allied victory.

WWI marked the beginning of what some have called "the century of oil," with many later conflicts occurring over its control. As the twenty-first century unfolds, the question for governments will not only be how to reduce carbon emissions but also how to secure access to the rare-earth minerals needed to do so. Unfortunately, this new century may see just as much conflict as the last.

UNIT 6 Law & Crime

Reading 1

The Death Penalty in the US

The Death Penalty in the US

In the US, the death penalty is sometimes given to people who are found guilty of committing very serious crimes. These crimes could include first-degree murder and treason, or betraying one's country. Capital punishment was brought to America by early settlers from Europe. In early America, people who were found guilty of murder and rape were routinely executed, either by hanging or by a firing squad. Convicted burglars, thieves, and even counterfeiters often received the death penalty. This was thought to be a deterrent to other criminals.

Over time, people began to feel that criminals were not evil. Instead, they were victims of poverty, poor education, and lack of opportunity. Society should focus on rehabilitation rather than punishment, they thought. Another reason for the change in thinking was economic. Prisons were very expensive. Early American states could not afford to keep many criminals behind bars. Rather than keep them in prison, they executed convicted criminals. But as society became richer during the Industrial Revolution, prisons became more affordable to maintain. For this and other reasons, keeping criminals in prison rather than executing them became a viable option.

By the mid-1800s, many states had banned the death penalty except in the case of convicted murderers. Those states were mostly in the northeastern part of the country, while the southern and western states kept the death penalty for many crimes. Even today, most executions happen in the southern and western states. These states are, in general, more politically conservative than northeastern ones, and conservatives are more likely to support capital punishment. In states with capital punishment, death by injection is the standard form of execution. It is considered the most humane way to carry out the sentence.

In the last few years in America, the debate over the death penalty has grown more intense. A powerful argument against the death penalty is that some of the people who are found guilty and sentenced to die are not actually guilty. New methods of verifying evidence, such as DNA testing, have helped free many death-row inmates. Because, in many cases, criminals cannot be proven one hundred percent guilty, it is not right to sentence them to death, opponents say. There is a chance that they may be innocent. The government of Illinois, one of the biggest states by population, abolished capital punishment in 2011 largely for this reason. Then in 2021, Virginia became the nation's first southern state to abolish the death penalty. The governor described this action as "the moral thing to do."

Another argument against the death penalty is pragmatic rather than philosophical—the high cost of executing a prisoner. Nowadays, anyone sentenced to die has the right to appeal the sentence several times. The state has to defend its case each time before a higher court. One study found that it costs the state more than \$1 million in legal expenses for a prisoner to use up all appeals against the death penalty.

The US remains in heated debate over capital punishment, but there is evidence that public opinion is turning against it. In 2019, for the first time, a majority of Americans (fifty-six percent) said they preferred life in prison over death as punishment for murder. If current trends continue, more states may be following Virginia's lead. The death penalty could soon be a thing of the past.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

The Mentally Challenged and the Death Penalty

Mentally challenged people have IQs of below seventy. Many mentally challenged people with IQs of fifty-five and above hold jobs, have children, and do many things that people with normal IQs do. They also commit murder and other crimes. When mentally challenged people commit crimes and are convicted, is it fair to put them to death, as other criminals are sentenced to death? This is a question that the American people and their courts have struggled with for many years. However, in recent years, it seems that the majority of Americans have come closer to agreement on the issue. Most people now think that putting mentally challenged people to death is “cruel and unusual punishment,” which is forbidden by the US Constitution.

Daryl Atkins had an IQ of fifty-nine. In the late 1990s, Atkins was found guilty of murder and was given the death penalty in Virginia. His case was appealed all the way up to the US Supreme Court. In 2002, the court ruled that Atkins and other mentally challenged persons may not receive the death penalty. This decision opposed a 1989 Supreme Court decision that said mentally challenged persons could be executed. Since 1976, approximately thirty-five mentally challenged people had been executed in the US.

In the 2002 decision, the court said that the nation had come to a consensus against executing the mentally challenged. They said it is unfair to execute someone who cannot fully understand how bad their actions were.

Reading 2

Bounty Hunters

Bounty Hunters

Sometimes criminals who run away from the police try to hide with the help of their friends and family. Others may flee to another country where the laws are different from the laws of their native country. In these cases, the government may offer a monetary reward, or bounty, for anyone who provides information that helps to catch the fugitive. Sometimes the bounty is small—just a few thousand dollars. Other times, however, the reward can be quite large—up to several million dollars. In 2003, the US offered a \$25 million bounty for Osama bin Laden. This was the largest reward ever offered by the US government. If a private citizen had aided in the capture of bin Laden, he or she would have become a very rich person.

Professional bounty hunters are a bit different. They do not just provide information to the authorities; they actually catch accused criminals themselves. Bounty hunters are not official members of the law-enforcement community, but they have a special role to play nonetheless. Their job is to find and arrest accused criminals who have skipped bail. “Skipping bail” is the term commonly used to describe the act of a person who is charged with a crime and then tries to run away. A person who skips bail is commonly called a “skip.”

What is bail? For many situations in the US and Canada, people who are charged with a crime can make a deal whereby they temporarily give the court some money to stay out of jail until they must appear in court. This money is called bail. The amount of bail depends on the gravity of the crime and other factors. It may be a nominal amount, but it most commonly falls between \$1,000 and \$100,000.

Many of the accused cannot afford to pay the money themselves, so they borrow it. The person who lends the money is called a bail bond agent. If the accused person goes to court on the appointed date, then the bail bond agent gets his or her money back, plus a fee. If the accused person misses the court appointment and runs away, then the bail bond agent loses the bail money.

This is where bounty hunters—also called bail enforcement agents—come in. Bounty hunters are hired by bail bond agents to find and catch skips who owe them money. They operate outside of jurisdictions, or legal boundaries, which means that they can go anywhere to catch a criminal, whereas most police can only operate locally. For example, the police in New York cannot go to California to arrest a skip, but bounty hunters can.

Sometimes skips are dangerous criminals charged with terrible crimes such as murder or rape, but most often, they are people accused of minor crimes, such as having drugs or failing to pay child support. Most states allow bounty hunters who have special licenses to arrest accused criminals, while a few do not allow this at all. Interestingly enough, in most states, licensed bounty hunters are legally allowed to break into the skip's home in order to arrest him or her. But Illinois, Kentucky, Oregon, and Wisconsin have laws against bounty hunting, and California has strict rules for the practice. For example, bounty hunters there are not allowed to enter a private home without permission.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Mackenzie Green, Bounty Hunter

Although bounty hunting is very dangerous work, it is a job that is not limited to men; some women are bounty hunters, too. Mackenzie Green is a very well-respected bounty hunter. In fact, she has been called the most successful bounty hunter in the US. Why is she so successful? She depends more on her brain than on physical strength. "A good bounty hunter relies on gut feelings and people skills to pick up information on the whereabouts of a skip," she says. This means that she trusts her feelings about people and situations to figure out if they are telling her the truth or if they are trying to hide something. She also doesn't carry a gun. "You can't tame a bull by hitting it with a stick," she says. This means that violence always leads to more violence. She prefers to use good people skills to get people to trust her—and then, when they least expect it, she arrests them.

When asked which qualities make a good bounty hunter, Mackenzie Green had this to say: "Being a bounty hunter is difficult work, and a person has to have experience in self-defense like judo and boxing, as well as a familiarity with weapons. A person also must be part detective to track down the skips, part lawyer to know what the different state laws allow, and part actor to try and get people to give you information that they otherwise wouldn't give out. A person must also be patient and lucky."

UNIT 7 Language & Literature

Reading 1

“I Have a Dream” by Martin Luther King, Jr. [excerpted and adapted]

“I Have a Dream” by Martin Luther King, Jr. [excerpted and adapted]

One hundred years ago, Lincoln signed a law that gave freedom to all slaves in the United States. But one hundred years later, the Negro is still not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly chained by segregation and discrimination. When the creators of our vast republic wrote the magnificent words of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, they were making a promise to all of their children. This promise was that all men would be guaranteed the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is clear today that America has not kept her promise as far as her citizens of color are concerned.

Nineteen sixty-three is not an end, but a beginning. Those who hope that the Negro just needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to doing things the way they have always been done.

There will be neither rest nor peace in America until the Negro is given his rights as a citizen. But there is something that I must say to my people who stand waiting at the doorway into the palace of justice. In the process of getting our rights, we must not be guilty of wrongful acts. We must not allow our protest to fall into violence. Again and again we must rise to the challenge of meeting physical force with soul force. Go back to Mississippi. Go back to Alabama. Go back to Georgia. Go back to the ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed.

In spite of the difficulties of the moment, I still have a dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: that all men are created equal. I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream that one day in the state of Alabama little black boys and little black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and little white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers.

This is our hope. This is the faith with which I return to the South. With this faith we will be able to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day. This will be the day when all of God’s children will be able to sing with new meaning, “My country, ‘tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the Pilgrims’ pride. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.”

And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true. So let freedom ring from the hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the peaks of California! Let freedom ring from every hill in Mississippi. When we let freedom ring, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God’s children will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, “Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!”

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Malcolm X: “By Any Means Necessary”

Malcolm X was born Malcolm Little in Nebraska on May 19, 1925. His father died when he was thirteen, and a few years later, he began a life of crime. He was arrested for stealing in 1945 and spent seven years in prison. While there, Malcolm educated himself by reading books. At the urging of two of his brothers, he joined the Nation of Islam. After leaving prison, he became a minister for the Nation of Islam and then an important leader in the African-American civil rights movement. Malcolm took the last name “X” to symbolize his true, unknown African name.

Malcolm X had a different philosophy than that of Martin Luther King. While King wanted black and white people to live together peacefully, Malcolm X at first claimed that black people were superior to white people and that the two races should live separately. Also, while King figured equal civil rights under US law, Malcolm X urged equal human rights. He saw the struggle for equality as international and wanted to bring about worldwide change at the United Nations. Whereas King stressed non-violence, Malcolm X said that African Americans should be able to protect themselves “by any means necessary”—including with the use of weapons.

Later in his life, Malcolm X stopped calling whites a race of “devils.” He continued, however, to encourage black people to have pride in their heritage, and he continued to advocate violence, if necessary. Malcolm X was shot to death while giving a speech in New York on February 21, 1965.

Reading 2

“*Désirée’s Baby*” by Kate Chopin [excerpted and adapted]

“*Désirée’s Baby*” by Kate Chopin [excerpted and adapted]

Désirée sat in her room one hot afternoon. The baby lay asleep upon her own great mahogany bed. One of the slaves stood fanning the child. Désirée’s eyes had been fixed absently and sadly upon the baby. She looked from her child to the boy who stood beside him and back again. “Ah!” It was a cry that she could not help, and she was not conscious of having made the utterance. The blood turned like ice in her veins, and moisture gathered upon her face. She stayed motionless, with her eyes riveted upon her child and her face full of fear.

Presently, her husband entered the room and without noticing her, went to a table and began to search among some papers. “Armand,” she called to him. But he did not notice. “Armand,” she said again. Then she rose and tottered toward him. “Armand,” she cried once more, grasping his arm, “look at our child. What does it mean? Tell me.”

“It means,” he answered lightly, “that the child is not white; it means that you are not white.”

When she could hold a pen in her hand, she sent a despairing letter to her mother, Madame Valmondé.

“My mother, they tell me I am not white. For God’s sake, tell them it is not true. I will die. I must die. I cannot be so unhappy and live.”

The answer that came was brief:

“My own Désirée: Come home to Valmondé, back to your mother who loves you. Come with your child.”

When the letter reached Désirée, she went with it to her husband’s study, and laid it open upon the desk before which he sat.

He said nothing. "Shall I go, Armand?" she asked in a voice sharp with agonized suspense.

"Yes, go."

"Do you want me to go?"

"Yes, I want you to go."

She turned away as if stunned by a blow and walked slowly toward the door, hoping he would call her back.

"Good-bye, Armand," she moaned.

He did not answer her.

Désirée went in search of her child. The nurse, Zandrine, was walking around the gallery with the baby. She took the little one from the nurse's arms and, descending the steps, walked away.

Désirée had not changed the thin white dress nor the slippers which she wore. She did not take the broad road which led to the far-off plantation of Valmondé. She walked across a deserted field, where the stubble bruised her tender feet and tore her white gown to shreds. She disappeared among the grasses that grew thick along the banks; and she did not come back again.

Several weeks later there was an unusual scene at the house. In the center of the backyard was a great bonfire. Armand Aubigny sat in the wide hallway that offered a view of the sight; and it was he who handed out to a half-dozen slaves the material that kept this fire burning.

The last thing to go into the fire was a tiny bundle of letters that Désirée had sent to him during the days before their marriage. There was the remnant of one back in the drawer from which he took them. But it was not Désirée's; it was part of an old letter from his mother to his father. He read it. She was thanking God for the blessing of her husband's love:

"But above all," she wrote, "I thank the good God for having arranged our lives so that our dear Armand will never know that his mother belongs to the race that is cursed with the brand of slavery."

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Master or Slave?

"Désirée's Baby" was one of Kate Chopin's (1851–1904) first and most famous short stories. In this story, Chopin explores the theme of race more strongly than in any of her other works.

Désirée is married to Armand, who owns a plantation and the many African-American slaves that work on it. This was typical in the southern United States at that time. Black people were brought to America, primarily from Africa, as slaves and then bought and sold like property. White people viewed African Americans as an inferior race, and it was shameful for a white person to have "mixed blood," as would result from having parents of different races.

This explains Désirée's concern after realizing that her son had black features. When Armand told Désirée that "the child is not white" and that "you are not white," he was referring to more than skin color. He meant that his wife and child were

inferior and were no longer acceptable to him.

This rejection was more than Désirée could bear, and she felt it was better to die than to live in such disgrace. When she walked away, the bushes tore her white dress, symbolizing that she was no longer a white person.

When Armand discovered the baby's mixed blood came not through Désirée but through his own mother, he had already lost his wife and son, and his life was destroyed.

One critic noted that Armand was as much a slave to his racial views as the real slaves that he controlled. "No real distinction based on color can be made between slave and master."

UNIT 8 Space & Exploration

Reading 1

Pluto: Dwarf Planet

Pluto: Dwarf Planet

In 2005, an astronomer in California looked through a telescope and found a large rocky object near Pluto. It looked large enough to be a planet. In fact, it seemed to be slightly bigger than Pluto. Thus, this object, which was eventually named Eris, created a dilemma for scientists. They had two choices: they could declare Eris the tenth planet in our solar system, or they could take away Pluto's status as a planet. In Prague, on August 24, 2006, the International Astronomical Union (IAU) took a vote on the proper terminology. The result was that Pluto and Eris were classified as "dwarf planets." In other words, there was one less planet in our solar system.

The IAU's resolution stated a three-part definition of "planet" that Pluto and Eris do not meet. To be called a planet, a body must 1. orbit the Sun, 2. have enough mass that it takes on a roughly round shape, and 3. be big enough to "clear the neighborhood" around its orbit. Number 3 means that planets dominate their area of space because they have either destroyed all other large nearby bodies or incorporated them. In contrast, the term "dwarf planet" denotes a body that fits numbers 1 and 2 but not 3, and is not a moon. Pluto was re-defined as a dwarf planet because it has not cleared its neighborhood. Only 2,300 kilometers wide, smaller than Earth's moon, it is one of the largest objects in the Kuiper belt. This is a section of the outer solar system containing many icy bodies that are smaller than planets.

The IAU's decision caused controversy among both scientists and the public. Although the change was semantic rather than scientific, some astronomers passionately opposed it. They argued that there is no precise definition of a planet's "neighborhood" or what it means to "clear" it. They also pointed out that the vote had only involved a small fraction of the 10,000 members of the IAU, with 237 voting for the resolution and 157 against. Some also worried that the new classification might wrongly make Pluto seem less important. That could affect future decisions about funding.

Ordinary people who had learned about Pluto in school were sad to see it go, almost as if they were losing a friend. The public feels a kind of affection for the smallest and most distant planet. Discovered in 1930, Pluto was named at the suggestion of an eleven-year-old girl. "Pluto" is the name of the Roman god of the underworld. But it is also the name of a cute Disney dog, which may partially explain the affection. One science journalist told *Wired* magazine, "We've thought of it as a poor little oddball that didn't fit in with the rest of the kids in the solar system and really needed to be protected."

Even as the IAU was taking its historic vote in 2006, NASA's New Horizons space probe was already eight months into its long journey toward Pluto. On July 14, 2015, New Horizons flew within 12,500 kilometers of Pluto's surface, gathering priceless data and images, and putting the dwarf planet back in the news. Interestingly, the man in charge of that mission, Dr. Alan Stern, disagrees with the IAU's decision. He rejects the idea that a true planet must clear its neighborhood. "They botched it," he told an audience in 2021. Many fans of Pluto agree. Pluto may have lost its status as a planet—at least for now—but it maintains its hold on our imaginations.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Planet X

People have always looked to the skies and wondered about what they saw. Five planets besides Earth—Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn—have been known since ancient times.

Another planet wasn't identified until 1781, with the discovery of Uranus. Observing the new planet, astronomers noticed something strange about its movement around the Sun. It was being pulled out of its expected orbit by the gravity of some large mass, which they guessed was another planet. Scientists calculated the likely size and location of this body and began searching for it, finally locating it in 1846. Neptune thus became the first planet to be discovered by mathematics.

However, Neptune couldn't fully explain all the "wobbles," or unexpected movements, of Uranus's orbit. Additionally, Neptune's orbit also wobbled. The American astronomer Percival Lowell was certain that there was yet another planet beyond Uranus and Neptune. He searched for what he called "Planet X" without success until his death in 1916. Thirteen years later, at the astronomical observatory that Lowell founded, Clyde W. Tombaugh continued the search. With the advantage of a much more powerful telescope than Lowell had used, Tombaugh found Planet X on February 18, 1930, making headlines all over the world.

The new planet needed a name. There were thousands of ideas, but the winning suggestion came from an eleven-year-old English schoolgirl named Venetia Burney. Planet X would be called Pluto. The name's link to the Roman god of the underworld seemed appropriate to the icy, deadly conditions of that planet's surface. And the first two letters are the initials of Percival Lowell, honoring the man who first guessed at Pluto's existence.

Reading 2

Asteriod Impacts on Earth

Asteriod Impacts on Earth

Asteroids are small objects that orbit the Sun. They are small compared to the Earth and the other planets and are made of different kinds of minerals. Astronomers have mapped the coordinates of many asteroids, but not all. Though they may seem small and far away, asteroids have hit the Earth many times, sometimes causing extreme destruction, and it seems clear that an asteroid will hit the Earth again in the future.

Most asteroids are located in what is called the asteroid belt or main belt, an area between Mars and Jupiter. All of these asteroids are very far from the Earth and will never come close. Several hundred asteroids, called trojans, follow Jupiter in its orbit, and asteroids can be found in the outer solar system as well, past the orbit of Saturn. Most importantly to humans, however, there is also a set of asteroids that orbit close to the Earth. These are called near-Earth asteroids (NEAs). NEAs are included in a group called near-Earth objects (NEOs), which also includes comets and meteoroids. Because of their closeness, NEAs are dangerous to the Earth.

Most likely, only about half of all NEAs have been discovered. There is no way to predict when an asteroid could strike the Earth. In 1989, an NEA passed very close, but it was only discovered as it was going away. If it had hit the Earth, it would have been a catastrophic surprise, with 50,000 times the destructive force of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Though the possibility of an asteroid striking the Earth soon is not great, it is almost certain that the Earth will be struck sometime.

NEAs have struck the Earth before, and in fact, most scientists believe that an asteroid caused the extinction of the dinosaurs. This sort of asteroid would have been one or more kilometers in diameter. If it hit land—at a likely velocity of fifteen to twenty kilometers per second—it must have caused a huge cloud of dust that would have blocked out all sunlight for at least a year. This would have caused a short ice age, leading to the extinction of numerous plants and animals. If the asteroid hit water, which is more likely, the cloud of water vapor it produced would have had a similar effect. Further, the shock from the impact could have caused volcanoes to erupt, adding to the dust and vapor around

the Earth. Scientists think these kinds of events happen every million years or so. The outlines of the craters of some of these impacts are still visible from space.

The last time a large NEA struck the Earth was in 1908, near the Podkamennaya Tunguska River in Siberia, Russia, in what became known as the Tunguska Event. The asteroid was between thirty and sixty meters across and exploded in the air instead of hitting the ground, causing an explosion equivalent to thirty million tons of TNT. Fortunately, because the event occurred in a very remote place, no one was killed; however, hundreds of kilometers away, windows were smashed, and people could feel extreme heat. Vibrations were recorded in the earth as far as 1,000 kilometers away. The forest near the blast site had been flattened as far as thirty kilometers from the center, and some trees were burned completely. The asteroid itself had been entirely vaporized.

Though people may worry about large asteroids striking the Earth, the large ones are easy to detect. Smaller NEAs are much harder to find, and there are many more of them. Clearly, the history of asteroids and the Earth is not over.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

It's All in the Location

Different kinds of NEAs can produce different kinds of damage. The kind of damage depends partly on the size and speed of the asteroid. However, it also depends on where the asteroid hits. An asteroid that hits the ocean will have a very different effect than one that strikes the land.

An asteroid that hits the water would produce the most destruction. While an asteroid hitting land would cause damage in only one place, an ocean strike would cause a tsunami (a giant wave), which could severely damage or destroy cities close to the ocean over a very large area. Seventy percent of the Earth is covered by oceans, so an ocean impact is more likely. If a large asteroid struck the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, the tsunami could destroy cities on the east coast of North and South America, as well as the western cities of Europe and Africa. Such an asteroid would only have to be about forty to sixty meters wide.

An asteroid strike on land would be destructive in a concentrated way. It would take an object about seventy-five meters wide to destroy a city. This would not include all parts of the city, and suburbs might not be damaged so severely. To destroy an entire urban area would take an asteroid of around 160 meters. A 700-meter asteroid could destroy a small country. However, an asteroid a kilometer wide would be deadly enough to kill millions of people simply by the dust and vapor it would throw into the atmosphere.

UNIT 9 Sports & Fitness

Reading 1

Cheating in Sports

Cheating in Sports

"It doesn't matter whether you win or lose; it's how you play the game." This is a common saying in American sports, meaning that fun and good sportsmanship are more important than victory. However, two related factors have been pushing American sports in a different direction. One of these factors is the intensity of Americans' obsession with their favorite teams, and the other is the money and prestige that go along with winning. These two factors put extreme pressure on both players and coaches to focus single-mindedly on victory. Inevitably, the result is a problem that is spreading and becoming more serious. That problem is cheating.

Of course, there are rules in all sports to penalize cheating. So coaches and players have had to come up with ingenious ways to get around the rules. Getting a competitive edge, even unfairly, is seen as a "strategy" rather than cheating. Illegal acts are now even being accepted as part of the game. Coaches encourage players to cheat, or coaches simply look the other way when they know players commit illegal acts during games. And referees either fail to intervene, or they impose minimal penalties.

A professor of sports and recreation, Dr. James Frey, introduced the term "normative cheating" to refer to the methods of cheating commonly used in sports today. This refers to strategies used to create conditions of some advantage over an opponent. They are called "normative" because there are no explicit rules against these strategies. Instead, they are loopholes that coaches and players have learned how to use to gain a competitive advantage.

There are many forms of normative cheating. In basketball, for example, it is common for a player to pretend to be fouled in order to receive an undeserved foul shot. In football, players are typically coached to use techniques to hold or trip opponents without referees noticing. And in baseball, home teams often "doctor" their fields to suit their strengths and minimize the strengths of their opponents. For example, if a home team knows they will face a fast team, they will spread water or sand between bases to slow down the runners of the other team. Another technique used by home teams to cheat is increasing the heat in the visitor's locker room to make the athletes sluggish. And some schools even use psychological tricks such as painting the visitor's locker room pink, a color said to reduce strength and make people less aggressive.

Normative cheating extends to off-the-field areas of sports as well. Colleges compete by offering scholarships to the best high-school players in the country. Although there are rules about when and how often colleges can contact high-school recruits, coaches are adept at bending these rules. For instance, it is against the rules to send newspaper clippings about a university sports team to players being recruited. However, if a newspaper clipping is attached to the back of a letter, it is technically OK, even if the letter has only one sentence.

Normative cheating has even entered American high-school sports. If a good athlete wants to play for a school far away from where he or she lives, he or she may move to the home of a relative or friend that does live near that school. That way, the athlete technically lives within the school district of his or her new school. The athlete has obeyed the letter of the law, but not the spirit.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Performance-Enhancing Drugs

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has established special rules banning drugs that enhance performance. However, some athletes are experimenting with new drugs that are difficult to detect. The IOC forbids athletes from using steroids as strength builders. The most popular steroids are man-made forms of testosterone, a hormone already present

in the body.

Another popular performance-enhancer is erythropoietin (EPO). EPO promotes red blood cell production. These cells deliver oxygen throughout the body. The oxygen boost it provides can improve an athlete's performance in a twenty-minute run by thirty seconds. In a marathon, it could give an athlete a four-minute advantage. EPO is dangerous because it can make the blood too thick for the heart to pump.

Human growth hormone (HGH), a third commonly used enhancer, contains a naturally occurring amino acids that helps control growth from birth to adulthood. Genetically engineered HGH became available in 1985. Athletes use HGH to develop bigger muscles and then take steroids to strengthen the muscles. The drug is hard to detect because it passes out of the body in less than forty-five minutes.

Not everyone agrees that such drugs ought to be banned. Some argue that they should be allowed in order to help athletes perform at their best. As long as all competitors have access to the same substances, the argument goes, then there is nothing unfair about them.

Reading 2

Qi

Qi

What is *qi*? *Qi* (pronounced "chee" in English) means different things to different people. Some say that it is a force created by practicing breathing exercises. Some say that it is highly developed concentration. Still others say that it is an electrical force that circulates within the bodies of all living creatures. Some even claim that *qi* is a person's soul. Where does the idea of *qi* come from? Most information about *qi* comes from ancient Asian civilizations. For thousands of years, the people of India have believed in this type of energy, which they call prana. According to Indian mystics, or holy men, highly developed prana can allow a man to equal the physical strength of several men, letting him bend thick metal bars and lift heavy objects. The Chinese call this force *qi*, the Koreans *gi*, and the Japanese *ki*.

Regardless of its name, the traditional thinking in Asia is that this energy can be used for health, relaxation, and self-defense. Special *qi* doctors in China, Korea, and Japan believe that this force travels through our bodies like cars on a highway. They believe that some types of pain are caused by *qi* being unable to flow smoothly, similar to a traffic jam on a road. They use a special system of needle therapy called acupuncture or *reiki*, a type of healing massage, to help unblock those areas where *qi* cannot flow freely.

Sometimes these doctors are able to direct the *qi* from their own bodies into the bodies of their patients. *Qi* meditation, or *qigong*, popular in China, teaches its followers to send their *qi* to the muscles of the heart, stomach, face, and neck. These are the places where stress builds up the most. These people believe that learning how to direct their *qi* to these areas will help them relax and live longer, healthier lives.

Probably the best-known examples of *qi* development can be found in the area of martial arts. Practices like hapkido, karate, and kung fu teach people to develop their *qi* for self-defense. The Shaolin monks of Central China are masters of one of the oldest styles of kung fu, Shaolin Wushu. They are known for their ability to control their *qi* and do things with their bodies that seem to defy the laws of physics, such as breaking bricks with their bare hands, balancing their bodies on the edges of swords, and enduring freezing cold temperatures with no discomfort.

Can science prove the existence of *qi*? With modern computer technology and sensitive recording equipment, maybe it can. Researchers from the University of Southern California have been performing experiments to see if there are any actual physical changes in the bodies of people who undertake *qi* meditation, and they have found interesting results. By attaching special computers that measure brain waves to the heads of *qi* meditation students, scientists have been able to detect unusually high levels of gamma waves in their brains. These are the fastest electromagnetic waves in the brain and are linked to elevated consciousness and intense concentration. *Qigong* practitioners are also able to induce changes in the temperature of certain areas of their bodies. This energy can be observed on special machines used to monitor body heat.

Is *qi* meditation helpful? Is *qi* real? Whether science says it is or not, many people throughout the world have no doubt about its existence or its benefits for the body and mind. Maybe the only way to know for sure is to try for yourself!

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Qi as a Weapon?

Though most people study *qi* for health reasons, the Soviet Union may have used it for a much darker purpose. Some researchers believe that the Soviet Union attempted to make a machine that used *qi* energy as a weapon to hurt, and sometimes kill, other people. This machine, invented in secret during the 1960s, was discovered by the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in the early 1990s after the fall of the Soviet Union. “We started getting all of these files that were once secret,” said one retired Air Force Colonel who helped translate Russian military documents into English. “We thought that this was a joke. I mean, who would have taken this stuff seriously, the idea that mind waves could kill a person? But the [Soviet government] did a lot of research into the stuff,” he said.

The machine looked like a fighter pilot’s helmet but with a lot of wires and computer attachments on its outside. According to some Russian scientists who worked on this top-secret project, test subjects would put the helmet on their head, look at their target, and concentrate. After a few seconds, the targets would begin to react strangely. “We were able to achieve success (death) with small animals up to the size of a dog. Larger animals and humans would just get hot and sweaty,” said a Russian military officer who worked on the program. Luckily for the dogs and cats of the world, this program was stopped in the mid-1960s, when Russia decided to focus more on its space race to the moon with the US.

UNIT 10 People & Opinions

Reading 1

Under the Influence

Under the Influence

The past two decades have seen the rise of a new type of celebrity. Their fame comes from their ability to entertain fans and influence viewers with their opinions and recommendations. These celebrities are known as social-media influencers, and they've become an essential part of youth culture as both role models and spokespeople.

Social-media influencers have done much to change how people interact with one another. They've also helped change how companies, governments, and industries interact with us. For most people, influencers are sources of entertaining and informative content about topics such as fashion or video games. But others see them in a much less positive light. Many critics believe that influencers can quickly become negative role models because they frequently act poorly in stream and in public. For example, the YouTuber PewDiePie has been called out several times for making racially charged comments in stream. But not all influencers are simply acting out for the camera. Some use their celebrity to create discourse and spread messages of positivity.

People often criticize social media for contributing to a growing sense of superficiality in society. By using filters and beauty applications such as Facetune, content creators can create a "perfect" version of themselves. These beauty applications have been criticized for being shallow and for pressuring people to try and obtain an impossible standard of beauty. In response, some influencers promote body positivity. Body positivity is a social movement meant to stop people's growing sense of dissatisfaction with their appearance. Its purpose is to empower individuals and challenge the ways in which society views and presents the physical body. It promotes all body types no matter their shape, size, race, gender, or appearance. The movement, which started small, is now supported by many social-media influencers and "traditional" celebrities, including Alicia Keys, Jameela Jamil, and Demi Lovato.

Social media isn't used just for entertainment; it's also used to share ideas. Unfortunately, though, some of these ideas are damaging and promote hate. But for every hate-filled and degrading post, there are those who counter by promoting equality, understanding, and healing. In 2020, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, which started in 2013, gathered huge public attention following George Floyd's death in Minneapolis. With the help of many influencers, the movement generated over 11.8 million engagements (likes, shares, and comments) on Instagram. The magnitude of public attention given to the movement even brought in corporate support. Companies such as Walmart, Nike, H&M, and others, went on to promise large donations to the BLM movement.

Social-media influencers also circulate information about global concerns such as global warming and wildlife conservation. Their efforts are further advanced thanks to traditional celebrities, such as Leonardo DiCaprio, Mark Ruffalo, and Billie Eilish, who have posted on social media in support of the fight against climate change. Influencers such as Greta Thunberg have used social media to great effect and have even helped to create real change by inspiring people to make donations and change policies.

Influencers may be a relatively new form of celebrity, but their reach is just as broad as that of a traditional celebrity. One might even argue that their influence goes further because they connect more with their fans. Their words carry weight, and when they're used appropriately, they can influence people to change the world for the better.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Online Cancel Culture

"Cancel culture" is the practice of removing support from a public figure or company after they've done or said something considered offensive. Many see cancel culture as a force for good. It has helped to fight abuse, racism, and many other kinds of wrongdoing. But others argue that cancel culture goes too far in punishing people and prevents

free speech.

The year 2020 saw many famous figures being “canceled.” Among them were celebrities such as J. K. Rowling, Jimmy Fallon, Vanessa Hudgens, and others. Another big celebrity cancellation involved actress and MMA fighter Gina Carano. Carano refused to apologize for a series of controversial posts on social media, which eventually led to her being dismissed from Disney+ series *The Mandalorian*. These included comments offensive to minority groups and posts which cast doubt on the threat of COVID-19. In addition to losing her job, she also lost an agreement with toy manufacturer Hasbro. The toymaker dropped her Mandalorian action figure after she was taken off the show.

Not everyone agreed with Carano’s dismissal. Her fans continued to stand behind her. They even created a petition, which had gathered more than 75,000 signatures as of March 2021, for Disney to rehire her. For many of her fans, dismissing Carano was an attack on her right to free speech and an example of cancel culture going too far.

Reading 2

Anita Roddick

Anita Roddick

Anita Roddick was born Anita Lucia Perilli in an English bomb shelter on October 23, 1942, during World War II. Anita’s parents and her three siblings had fled from Italy just before the war began. Her mother ran a café, and Anita helped her after school and on weekends. After college, Anita taught briefly at a secondary school. She soon quit, however, and traveled to places such as Australia, South Africa, and Tahiti. In 1970, she married a poet named Gordon Roddick. The couple opened a restaurant and then a hotel, and they had two daughters together, Justine and Samantha.

In 1976, Gordon decided to fulfill a dream—he was going to ride a horse from South America to North America. Anita needed money while he was away, so she opened a small cosmetics store called The Body Shop. Roddick later wrote on her website that it wasn’t just economic necessity that inspired her to open the store. She was also influenced by the cultures she had experienced in her travels, especially women’s “body rituals” that used natural ingredients. And she remembered the hatred of waste that her mother had taught her as a child. “Why waste a container when you can refill it? And why buy more of something than you can use? The Body Shop’s environmental activism was born out of ideas like these.”

Roddick’s first store offered only fifteen products, but in time, this number would grow to more than 300. Roddick was selective about the types of products her stores carried. Most cosmetics sold at that time were tested on animals, and some animals were killed to produce beauty products. Roddick said she refused to sell products that harmed animals or ones that damaged the environment. She recycled all her bottles, used recycled items in the store, and promoted the idea of fair trade with developing countries. Roddick believed that consumers should support businesses that are run ethically. This ideology was called “ethical consumerism” and was an early form of the modern green movement.

As The Body Shop grew, Roddick became an activist for many causes, including protecting the rain forests, helping poor farmers, saving whales, and working to end sex discrimination. In 1990, she founded Children on the Edge, a charity that helps orphans in Europe and Asia. She also helped establish a magazine called The Big Issue, which was produced and sold by homeless people. Her volunteer work earned Roddick many awards and honors. In 2003, the Queen of England appointed her a Dame of the British Empire.

In 2005, Roddick announced that she was going to sell The Body Shop and give away her fortune, estimated to be more than \$100 million. A year earlier, she had been diagnosed with hepatitis C, which she had caught from a blood transfusion years before. During the last three years of her life, she campaigned to raise public awareness of the disease. Roddick died of a brain hemorrhage on September 10, 2007, at the age of sixty-four. She did not leave any of her money to her daughters; instead, she gave it all to charity. Roddick’s greatest creation lives on, however. The Body Shop is now owned by Natura, a Brazilian company known for its ethical practices. The company operates three thousand Body Shop stores in over seventy countries.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Is “Green” a Myth?

The word “green” has become the usual way of indicating that something is good for the environment. Customers are looking for green products, meaning ones that are natural, pure, and made from recycled materials. They feel good about helping the Earth and about buying food and cosmetics that are healthier for their bodies. Anita Roddick sensed this when she founded The Body Shop in 1976. She advertised cosmetics that were “one hundred percent pure” and boasted that The Body Shop’s products were not tested on animals. Also, she said The Body Shop did not take unfair advantage of the workers in poor countries.

For some people, this sounded too good to be true. In 1994, reporter Jon Entine wrote a famous magazine article disputing Roddick’s claims. He said that The Body Shop’s cosmetics were not as pure as Roddick claimed and that most of the ingredients in its products were, indeed, tested on animals. The company fought back against the accusations, but it did change the phrase on its cosmetic labels. Instead of “not tested on animals,” the phrase became “against animal testing.” Later, other critics joined in. The London chapter of Greenpeace accused The Body Shop of exploiting poor workers.

Today, many other “green” companies face similar criticism. Are products that are marketed as “green” really good for the environment, or do producers simply claim that they are so they can make more money? It’s a tough question. Thanks to writers such as Entine, however, one thing is certain: people are less likely to trust the manufacturer’s word.

UNIT 11 Cross-Cultural Viewpoints

Reading 1

Ideas About Beauty

Ideas About Beauty

Researchers have found convincing evidence that people around the world tend to rate beauty in much the same way. Groups from different cultures do not really show that much difference in judging the main factors of beauty. However, researchers do not agree on whether genetics or culture is the bigger influence on people's judgments.

Devendra Singh, a psychologist at the University of Texas, conducted an experiment in 1993 to find out if different men found different female body shapes attractive. Dr. Singh gave drawings of different male body shapes to a group of men. Then he asked them to choose the most attractive body shape. The men in the study came from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. Even so, they all tended to rate the "hourglass" shape as the most attractive. In fact, Dr. Singh found that any woman whose waist was seventy percent as wide as her hips was judged as attractive by most men. This was true no matter how big the woman was overall. Body shape, not weight, seemed to be the critical factor for the men in this survey.

Dr. Singh explained this result in terms of evolution. Women with an hourglass shape tend to have higher levels of estrogen, a female hormone, than women who do not have this body shape. Higher estrogen levels also increase fertility, the ability to conceive and give birth to children. Thus, Dr. Singh argues, the men who choose this type of woman have a better chance of having healthy kids. This means that over time, their preference would be adaptive. That is, evolution would favor men who have genes for the selection of these especially fertile women.

Douglas Yu, a biologist at Imperial College in London, disagrees with Dr. Singh's conclusions. Dr. Yu thinks that cultural ideas of beauty, especially those spread by mass entertainment and advertising, have enormously influenced how men judge attractiveness. In order to test his thesis, Dr. Yu traveled to southeast Peru to interview men in a remote tribe. These people live far from the reach of the television, movies, and magazines of the industrialized world. Dr. Yu found that the men in this isolated community preferred heavier women with wider waists than those preferred by the men in Dr. Singh's study. Because this small community has lived without mass communication, their own culture has not been influenced by outside standards of beauty.

In order to check the reliability of his study, Dr. Yu surveyed two other groups of men from the same tribe. The second and third groups surveyed by Dr. Yu had more exposure to mass entertainment and advertising. The results of these later surveys showed that as men from this isolated tribe came into contact with movies and ads, their standards of beauty began to change more toward those of the industrialized world. Dr. Yu concluded from these findings that even if evolution played a part in men's selection of mates, cultural influences are more powerful in the end. Nowadays, both satellite communication and the internet are flooding every corner of the world with images and information from almost every culture. It is becoming harder and harder to find isolated communities. Soon it may be impossible to prove which side is correct in the genetics-versus-culture debate, simply because there will be no uninfluenced groups left to ask.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

A Beauty Academy

Venezuela may make most of its money from exporting oil, but the country is probably better known for exporting beauty pageant stars. No other country comes close to matching Venezuela's record for sending winners to the Miss World and Miss Universe contests.

How has a country with only twenty-eight million people done it? The answer is probably connected to the Miss Venezuela Academy. This is a special school for Miss World and Miss Universe contestants run by Osmel Sousa for almost four decades until his retirement in 2018. Continuing his work, the school's staff find women in dance clubs, in

shopping centers, in schools, and on the sidewalks to apply for the school. Other women come to the school on their own.

The school has strict criteria as to who can enter. The women must be between the ages of seventeen and twenty-four, be at least 1.7 meters tall, and have the ability to answer difficult contest questions. And one more thing: they have to look the “right” way in a swimsuit—and be willing to have plastic surgery to achieve that. The finalists for the school are chosen in March so that the school’s special plastic surgeons have time to do their work. The women must be fully recovered from their operations by September, when the contests begin.

The Miss Venezuela Academy has survived both the departure of Osmel Sousa and the coronavirus pandemic. A graduate of the school, Alejandra Conde, was crowned Miss Venezuela 2020 after a mostly “virtual” competition.

Reading 2

Bribery Or Business as Usual?

Bribery Or Business as Usual?

Cross-cultural trainers often advise those traveling through or working in another culture to show sensitivity to cultural differences. What they mean is that visitors should accept the behaviors of the new culture even if they seem strange or wrong. In cross-cultural contact, right and wrong may be understood differently by the two cultures.

According to this view, judgments about ethical behavior are subjective and differ from place to place. Take, for example, the behavior of bribery. In most countries, businesses that bribe government officials in order to get favors or special treatment are considered to be acting unethically. However, this behavior may be traditionally allowed or even expected in some cultures. In a German magazine, one minister in the Thai government’s Office of Land Management was quoted as saying, “Bribes are part of traditional Thai culture.” This minister went on to explain that his employees were told to accept any money offered to them, as long as they did not ask for it. The bribes were considered not corruption but a “bonus,” a needed addition to the very low pay of this office’s employees.

Bribes may be required in a variety of business situations. They are most often paid just before a contract is finalized. Bribes may also be paid to suppliers to ensure quick delivery, or they may be given to distributors to guarantee delivery of high-quality products. When such bribes are meant to speed up a business deal or make it go more smoothly, they may be referred to as “grease payments.” Bribes may also be used to buy “protection” for a business, either against some harmful act or against government harassment.

In an effort to crack down on the payment of bribes to foreign governments, the US passed a major new law in the 1970s. The Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) was created after an official probe revealed how much money US companies were paying in bribes to governments and officials in other countries. More than 400 companies doing business internationally had paid over \$300 million in bribes. These bribes were hurting the image of the companies within the US. Therefore, the American government proposed the FCPA to restore integrity to American business and confidence among American consumers.

According to the FCPA, any US business caught paying bribes to any official or agent of another country’s government could be punished by fines or imprisonment. The fines could be up to twice the amount of the bribe. The term of imprisonment could be as much as five years. But this law actually put US businesses at a disadvantage in the global market. Companies from other countries were still paying bribes to do business. Therefore, the US government worked with its major trading partners on a treaty to crack down on bribery and other unethical business practices. In 1997, thirty-four countries signed an agreement called the Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions.

There is no clear differentiation between bribes and gifts in either the FCPA or the international convention. But if a gift—especially a gift of money—is given with the goal of receiving some favorable action, then it is most likely a bribe. On the other hand, a gift is not viewed as a bribe when it is given after the deal is closed or service has been provided.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Promoting Business Ethics

A surprising number of employees in large companies report feeling pressure to “do the wrong thing.” One out of eight workers reported that their coworkers or managers somehow pressured them to do something against the company’s ethical standards. This kind of corruption has led several large companies into difficulty and even complete failure.

When a large corporation fails due to corruption, a clear message is sent to the public. That message is, “Unethical behavior will get you in trouble.” It appears that more students are getting this message, as business ethics courses are becoming more popular. Interestingly, however, very few MBA programs in North America require students to take any business ethics courses. For this reason, an international organization called Enactus is working hard to train young businesspeople to make ethical business decisions.

Enactus, formerly known as Students in Free Enterprise, works through teams of university students who volunteer their time to work in training courses and to develop projects that make a positive difference in the world. These teams can be found on more than 1,500 campuses in thirty-six countries around the world. The organization is supported by faculty advisors on these campuses, and many international corporations take part in events organized by Enactus.

Each year, the teams from each university write an annual report of their activities and give a presentation in a competition. The best team is awarded the Enactus World Cup.

UNIT 12 Business & Economics

Reading 1

Adventure Tours for Charity

Adventure Tours for Charity

In almost any magazine or newspaper in England, you can find advertisements for adventure tours to exotic places. These exciting tours can be bicycling, hiking, or even motorcycle trips across deserts, over mountains, and around live volcanoes! Many of these tours are conditional on a requirement that makes them more interesting to some people—you must raise money for charity first.

One advertisement offers people something called the “Scottish Highlands Triple Challenge.” The advertisement describes it as a weekend of cycling, trekking, and canoeing, ending at the top of Ben Nevis, the highest mountain in the UK. The organization that sets up this tour is advertising for people who can give time and effort to raising money for a good cause. For their hard work, these people will also be able to take the holiday of a lifetime.

The first thing that people have to do is sign up for the tour. The number of people who can go on each tour is limited, and many tours fill up fast. Those who sign up then have to pay a deposit of £350 (US\$480) in order to hold their place on the tour. People cannot get their deposit back later if they change their minds, so they had better be sure they really want to go.

Next, each person must choose a charity and raise a minimum amount of money for it. They can choose from a long list of organizations working on important causes, from animal shelters to medical care for the elderly. The required amount is usually between £1,500 and £2,500 (US\$2,000 to \$3,500). In order to raise this much money, some people send letters to friends and relatives asking for sponsorships. Other people have big parties where all of the guests must pay admission—or they even hold contests. One farmer divided up his field into one-meter squares to raise money. People could buy one square of the field for £1 each. Then the farmer let his cow walk across the field. The entrant who had bought the square where the cow dropped its first “cow patty” won a prize. Surprisingly, the majority of people who go on the adventure tours end up collecting more than the minimum money required.

Some people question the morality of this system, saying that it is wrong for part of the money that people collect to be used for someone’s vacation. However, the companies try to keep the overall cost of the tours low so that at least sixty or seventy percent of the money that is raised goes to the charity. Why not mix capitalism with giving, they ask? One company, which runs ten to fifteen tours a year, said they make about £50,000 on each one.

Do people really want to spend their vacations doing something like bicycling for 400 kilometers when they could be lounging on a beach? These tours are not for everybody. But the people who sign up for them all agree that it is a great experience. After trekking across the Namib Desert, a young construction worker from London cried as he hugged all of the other people in his tour group. Everyone cried. Most of them never thought that they could take part in an adventure like that. They had not only completed a once-in-a-lifetime trip, but the price they paid for it was to help someone in need. To them, that’s a great bargain.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

Help Yourself by Helping Others

Most of us are taught that we should be giving and helpful to others because it is the right thing to do. But it turns out that by helping other people, we benefit ourselves in multiple ways as well.

Behaving in a kind and generous way simply makes people feel good. In a 2008 experiment at Harvard Business School, participants who gave money to someone else ended up in a better mood than those who spent it on themselves. This was no surprise to the happiness expert Dr. Sonja Lyubormirsky. She advocates doing acts of kindness as one of the

most reliable ways of becoming happier—and of building connections with others, which increases happiness even more. In 2012, Lyubormirsky published a study on nine- to eleven-year-old children. After doing acts of kindness for several weeks, they were not only happier but also more popular.

Giving your time to charity can even make you physically healthier. Research has found that helping someone can actually decrease stress and lower blood pressure. This effect may be especially important for older people. A study on elderly couples found that those who did volunteer work were much less likely to die over a five-year period than those who didn't, and this was true regardless of age, exercise habits, and general health. Interestingly, the study found no link between receiving help and living longer. Apparently, as the saying goes, it really is better to give than to receive.

Reading 2

Ranking Companies

Ranking Companies

Perhaps you've heard someone boast about working for "a Fortune 500 company." But are you aware of precisely what that means? Fortune magazine is one of several publications that produce ranked lists of different American and international companies each year. There are several reasons why business publishers make these lists. One is that companies are always eager for an overview of their industry and where they stand in it. Investors and lenders also use the lists to evaluate the risk of doing business with various companies. And consumers and workers use the rankings to learn about companies' reputations when making purchases and looking for jobs.

Among all the rankings, the most trusted and well-known are done by Fortune and Forbes magazines. Fortune magazine publishes numerous company rankings every year, including the Fortune 500, 100 Best Companies to Work For, World's Most Admired Companies, and Global 500. The important lists published by Forbes include the World's Largest Companies, the World's Most Innovative⁴ Companies, and America's Best Large Employers.

The methodology used to compile a list depends on the type of list. Companies' sheer size is the criterion⁵ in many rankings, such as the Fortune 500 (the 500 biggest companies in the world). There are two types of measurements for a company's size, the first being performance in terms of sales and revenue. The second type of size measurement used in ranking is a company's market performance. This includes their market value, market share, and number of employees. Some rankings use only one of the two types of measurement as the basis for their lists; for example, the Fortune 500 is based simply on gross revenue. Others, such as Forbes's World's Largest Companies, use both types.

The other major category of rankings is more qualitative. These lists rely on the results of surveys sent by the publishers to executives, company employees, and analysts. The publishers' surveys present detailed statistical and analytical data on the companies that they rank. For example, in order to list the World's Most Admired Companies, Fortune magazine starts with the ten largest companies by revenue in sixty-six industries. It surveys thousands of executives, directors, and securities analysts related to those companies. They rate the various firms in their industry based on certain criteria. For the most admired companies, the survey respondents were asked to select the ten companies in any industry that they admired most. Apple was the winner of this list's number-one spot in 2021.

Another popular example is Forbes magazine's America's Best Large Employers ranking. To determine which 500 names should go on the list and in what order, the publisher sends surveys to over 20,000 workers at large American companies, non-profit organizations such as hospitals, and US divisions of multinational firms. The survey asks, "On a scale of 0–10, how likely would you be to recommend your employer to someone else?" Then it asks the same question about other employers in the same industry. In 2021, the University of Alabama topped this list. The Mayo Clinic, Yale, and PayPal made the top ten.

Of course, only huge corporations are even considered for inclusion on any of these lists, so they leave out plenty of excellent but obscure businesses. And it's difficult to know exactly how precise and accurate they are. But all ambitious entrepreneurs dream of seeing their company's name on one of these rankings someday. If nothing else, they provide something to shoot for.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING

What Makes a Company Great to Work For?

In business publications, lists like “The Best Companies to Work For” always attract a lot of attention. People enjoy reading these lists because they want to know how their own company compares to others. Or they want to clarify the reasons they like—or dislike—their own workplaces.

What makes a company attractive to employees? Surveys show that the companies high on lists of the best employers have a few things in common apart from good salaries and generous benefits. One is that they allow their employees to work with colleagues that they like and get along with. Great employers don't just hire the most talented people; they make sure that their employees are also professional, courteous, and cooperative. This is important because it only takes one team member with an unpleasant personality to make life miserable for everyone in the office.

Great employers also constantly create chances for their people to excel. This requires managers who are good at observing and communicating with their staff. Such individual attention is necessary in order to match workers with projects that will use their skills while also providing challenges.

But the most important aspect of a great employer is a little harder to define—it is a strong and positive corporate culture. The culture includes ethics. People want to work for a company that values excellence, honesty, and fairness, from the CEO down. Another part of a strong culture is an atmosphere of support; employees must feel that management cares about them and wants them to succeed.