

Food Myths Critical Thinking and Reading

Purpose

To critically read a student dialogue that contains various food myths/opinions and facts, and to be able to distinguish fact from fiction. Students will gain an appreciation for the facts and fiction concerning nutrition and culture.

Overview

This section requires students to read a series of statements made by students about the hazards and benefits of various foods. Then, students are required to:

1. Distinguish the “facts” from “opinions” in the dialogue.
2. Briefly summarize the facts in a short paragraph.
3. Based on the findings of their research, write an essay expressing their own views and conclusions drawn about the food, food-borne illness, and nutrition issues, using citations as necessary.

Time

Allocate one 2-hour session for tasks 1- 2 and assign the essay (task 3) as a homework assignment.

Key Concepts

Food myths and beliefs differ based on various factors including culture, ethnicity, social, economic and nutritional factors. Proponents of a food myth usually use a wide range of arguments they perceive as factual to support their myths and beliefs.

Skills

This section can enhance students’ critical reading, précis, or synthesis writing, essay, technical and scientific writing skills. It can also assist with the development of research, oral and written communication skills.

Materials

The handouts are the only materials needed. The answers can be made into transparencies for instructional purposes. Access to word processing software and the Internet would assist students with the preparation of the essay and other assignments.

Background

Food is essential to life. It is a reflection of various factors including people’s culture, history, socio-economic status and education. Foods are eaten primarily to provide the body with nutrients needed to sustain life. However, throughout history, food continues to be used as medicine, gifts, barter items, religious items, and even expressions of love in many societies. Food and nutritional science continue to make enormous progress with food analysis capabilities, healthy and safe food preparation and preservation techniques, and understanding the relationship between the nutrients and non-nutrients contained in foods and health. These

advances in technology and medicine have made a lot of information about food readily available so that healthy and safe eating practices can be adopted. Even so, the food myths that exist in various sectors of the population (e.g., various socio-economic status cultural or religious groups) are often not supported by scientific facts.

The following activity will allow students to explore a wide range of food myths and facts.

Procedure

The following Critical Reading activities can be done in groups or by individual students. Have students critically read the enclosed Food Myths Dialogue. Websites and other resources are available if students wish to explore these myths and facts further.

- Food Myths Dialogue: What's cooking? (see below) with Answers

1. For the Dialogue, review the text and **underline the facts** and bold or **highlight the opinions/myths**:

- a) The **facts** about food, food-borne illness, and nutrition issues
- b) The **opinions/myths** about food, food-borne illness, and nutrition

Share the facts and opinions by reading them out loud to the class.

2. Review what you have underlined and write a short paragraph of 4-5 sentences summarizing the facts you identified from the Dialogue.

3. Write an essay summarizing your beliefs (your opinion) about food, food-borne illness, and nutrition issues, incorporating facts and opinions from your Food Research. Use quotes and citations to justify your opinion. Share your opinion by reading the essay out loud to the class.

Additional Activities

Students can be asked to list various food myths that exist in their own families, communities and/or cultures, and discuss why these are myths and what are the relevant facts.

Interesting websites:

Food facts and trivia: <http://www.funtrivia.com/Food/Food.html>

Food Oddities and wonders: <http://members.aol.com/oddwonder/food.htm>

Follow Up Activities

Students can search for articles representing different points of view on food, food-borne illness, and nutrition, even from within their own communities. They can prepare their findings as newspaper articles for the School or local Newspaper.

Student Assessment

Give the following critical writing components to each student as a guide to their critical writing outputs:

- ❖ Distinguish between facts and opinions in the Student Dialogue on the food, food-borne illness, and nutrition.
- ❖ Briefly summarize these facts and opinions in a paragraph.
- ❖ Compare and contrast their own opinions on food, food-borne illness, and nutrition issues with facts from the Dialogue.
- ❖ Compose an essay with facts from the Dialogue, using citations to support facts listed in the essay.
- ❖ Practice reading this essay aloud in an articulate manner
- ❖ Be prepared to answer questions about contents of the essay.

Assign points for the following components of the critical writing products:

- ❖ Were the facts and opinions correctly identified and distinguished in each excerpt?
- ❖ Were these facts and opinions correctly and briefly summarized in a short paragraph for each excerpt?
- ❖ Were proper scientific terms used?
- ❖ Did the essay demonstrate a distinct point of view?
- ❖ Did the facts cited in the essay support this point of view?
- ❖ Did the essay include references/citations?
- ❖ Could the student answer questions from the audience about the facts and defend their points of view?

Food Myths Dialogue: “What’s Cooking?”

At Ambient High School, Ms. Nelson’s science class is engaged in a dialogue about facts and students’ their personal views on food and food safety issues. Underline the facts to differentiate them from the highlighted **opinions**.

Chris: “Everyone knows that it is best to eat fruit at the end of a meal for better digestion.”

Melody: “You should never eat after 9:00 p.m.”

Marjorie: “Eating red meat is not bad for you.”

Pedro: “My grandmother told me to never eat more then two eggs a week, so I don’t.”

Lisa: “I hate to eat fruit. So since fruit juice is just as good as fresh fruit, I drink juice instead.”

Michael: “You should drink only a small amount of water with your meal.”

Juan Carlos: “Since caffeine gives you energy, I drink two cups of Cuban coffee every morning to help me burn fat.”

Gayl: “Food products with the ‘no sugar added’ label means that it contains only naturally occurring sugars, and does not necessarily have less sugar than products that don’t have that on the label.’

Michelle: “Warm milk does not help people to fall asleep.”

Gus: “Mayonnaise is what makes chicken salad go bad.”

Meg: “Swallowing chewing gum will not upset your stomach.”

Liang: “When you eat Chinese food you may be hungry in an hour after you have eaten.”

Tommy: “Eating beans may give you gas.”

LaToya: “Eating high-cholesterol meals do not raise your cholesterol level.”

Katelyn: “Pork is the other white meat.”

Ryan: “Eating candy does not give you cavities.”

Faye: “My mom cooks with extra virgin olive oil because it is less fattening than other oils.”

Robert: “Sugar does not cause diabetes.”

Susie: “MSG (monosodium glutamate) does not occur naturally in foods. It is only there when you add flavoring products to your foods.”

Caesar: “I won’t gain weight because I only eat non-fat foods.”

Bill: “Some fats are good.”

Hilary: "Brown eggs are just as good as white eggs."

Laura: "If it is in the grocery store, then it is okay."

George: "Since I eat only natural foods I eat all that I want, so therefore I don't have to worry about over eating."

Adrienne: "It is important to eat everything on your plate, that's what my uncle always told us."

Renee: "Food-borne illnesses can occur from food prepared at home."

Rachel: "No way, food prepared at home is much safer than restaurant food."

Bruce: "You should not thaw out a turkey completely to room temperature before you cook it."

Rick: "My kitchen is always clean. I use a dishcloth to clean up everything after every meal."

Sally: "Nuking food in the microwave does not always kill bacteria found in foods."

Paige: "Just because the shell of an egg is not cracked does not mean that bacteria can not grow inside the unbroken egg."

Cameron: "A little mold won't hurt you. All you have to do is scrape it off with a knife, rinse off the food, and you are good to go."

Pete: "Hard boiled eggs need to be refrigerated."

Pierre: "My mom saves time by partially cooking meat and poultry ahead of time."

Calvin: "It is okay to give kids milk when they have a cold. My grandmother gave us milk and nothing ever happened to us."