

Join the national conversation!

# CONSIDERING THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS AND RISKS, IS BECOMING A VEGETARIAN A SMART DECISION?

Word Generation - Unit 3.10

## Focus Words

export | symbolic | domestic | integrate | efficient

## WEEKLY PASSAGE



After watching the movie, *Finding Nemo*, ten-year-old Alia made a big decision. She decided she would not eat meat any more. She did not want animals to be killed for food. Her story is not unique. Lately many children are choosing to be vegetarians.

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

There are many health benefits from adopting a vegetarian diet. Vegetarians can benefit from lower cholesterol levels, lower blood pressure, and lower rates of diabetes and colon cancer. By replacing meat with beans and nuts, vegetarians eat a diet lower in saturated fat and higher in fiber than meat-eaters.

Nonetheless, a vegetarian diet is not a very **efficient** way for people to get enough protein, iron, and vitamin B12. Meat contains all of these nutrients. So, it is important that vegetarians plan their meals so they do get enough protein and other vitamins and don't end up undernourished.

Some people note that eating meat is not only nutritious, but that it is part of the traditional

American diet. Thus, they think that eating meat is part of the American way of life. A huge roasted turkey is **symbolic** of the first American Thanksgiving. Hamburgers and hot dogs are traditional foods for Fourth of July barbecues. For some Americans, eliminating meat would be like giving up their culture and traditions.

Could the American tradition of eating meat be hurting the earth? Thirty percent of usable land on earth is devoted to producing meat. Feeding cattle and transporting meat creates almost one-fifth of the earth's greenhouse gases. This amount is more than the amount of greenhouse gases produced by cars, trucks, trains, and airplanes combined.

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

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

# Considering the possible benefits and risks, is becoming a vegetarian a smart decision?

## FOCUS WORDS OF THE WEEK

**export** : (verb) to carry or send for sale in another country

FORMS:

---

EXAMPLES OF USE:

---

NOTES:

---

**symbolic** : (adjective) standing for something else that can't be pictured or shown

FORMS:

---

EXAMPLES OF USE:

---

NOTES:

---

**domestic** : (adjective) made in or done in one's own country

FORMS:

---

EXAMPLES OF USE:

---

NOTES:

---

**integrate** : (verb) to form or unite into a whole

FORMS:

---

EXAMPLES OF USE:

---

NOTES:

---

**efficient** : (adjective) able to do well

FORMS:

---

EXAMPLES OF USE:

---

NOTES:

---

# Considering the possible benefits and risks, is becoming a vegetarian a smart decision?



## PROBLEM OF THE WEEK

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

For many farmers and ranchers, meat production is also a way to earn a living. The U.S. **exports** millions of pounds of meat a year. Many millions of pounds are eaten **domestically**, as well. The table shows the number of pounds of meat eaten by the average American during 5 different years.

Year	Average Meat Consumption
1985	200.4 lbs
1990	200.7 lbs
1995	207.7 lbs
2000	213.9 lbs
2005	220.2 lbs

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

- A) .2 pounds
- B) 0.8 pounds
- C) 19.2 pounds
- D) 19.8 pounds

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

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

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

## Considering the possible benefits and risks, is becoming a vegetarian a smart decision?



### THINKING SCIENTIFICALLY

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

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

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

Sasha says, "I don't think that's right. I heard that Americans used to eat much less meat than they do today."

Is Sasha correct? Has the amount of meat eaten **domestically** increased over time?

→ Anthony found this topic very interesting and decided to investigate this question.

#### Question:

Has the amount of meat that each person in the United States eats gone up over time?

#### Hypothesis:

The amount of meat eaten per person in the United States has stayed about the same from 1950 to 2000.

#### Procedure:

1. From the data, find the total number of animals used for food in the United States in 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000.
2. Find the total population of the United States for each year listed.
3. For each year listed, calculate the amount of meat eaten per person.

Here are the data that Anthony found:

Year	Total Number of Animals Used for Food in One Year in the U.S.	Total United States Population	Number of Animals Used for Food in One Year, Per Person
1950	21 billion	151 million	about 139
1960	28 billion	179 million	
1970	38 billion	203 million	
1980	43 billion	226 million	
1990	48 billion	248 million	
2000	59 billion	281 million	

Can you complete Anthony's table?

The year 2010 is not listed on the table. What would you predict the data to be? Do you have ideas about how you could find that data?

Do you notice a trend? If so, what is this trend?

# Considering the possible benefits and risks, is becoming a vegetarian a smart decision?



## DEBATING THE ISSUE

### Get ready...

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

**A** Everyone should be vegetarian because eliminating meat from our diets is better for the environment and better for people's health.

**B** No one should be a vegetarian because, without eating meat, it is difficult to get all of the necessary nutrients. In addition, meat is delicious, and eating it is symbolic of U.S. culture and traditions.

**C** People should have the freedom to choose to eat meat, but the meat industry must change. The meat industry must find a way to reduce their output of greenhouse gases.

**D** Whereas no one should regulate anyone else's diet, schools and doctors should encourage people to eat less meat. Eliminating meat consumption is healthy and good for the environment.

**E** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### Get set...

Be ready to provide evidence to back up your position during your class discussion or debate. Jot down a few quick notes:

---

---

---

---

---

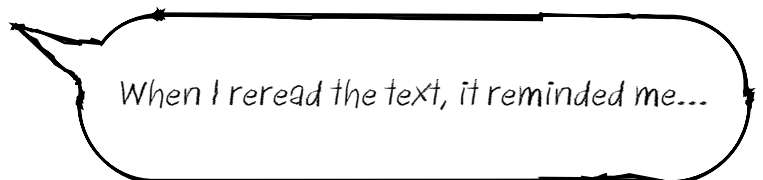
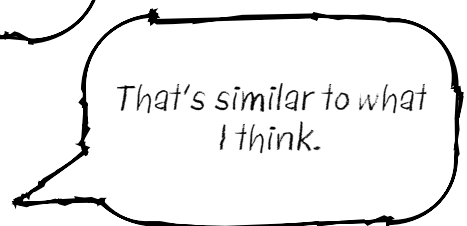
---

---

---

# GO!

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these.





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

export | symbolic | domestic | integrate | efficient

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.