

# **BRIDGEPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS SUMMER READING PACKET**

Directions: Read each passage using your close reading strategies. You may need to read it more than once. Then answer the matching question completely. Check for good grammar and spelling.

## **Grade 6 going into 7**

## About Homelessness

### By ReadWorks



Homelessness is an issue that affects people of every age and from every country. If you walk down the street in many big cities in the United States, you might notice people sleeping on the sidewalk or begging for food or money. These individuals are very visible to passersby, and it is difficult to ignore them. But there are also homeless people who do not sleep on the streets. They are not as visible to the public eye, but they are also homeless. These people often spend their nights sleeping in shelters, which provide food, rooms, and often a variety of social services (like daycare). We might not see these people on the streets, but it does not mean that they aren't suffering.

When thinking about homelessness, one of the first questions that might come to mind is: why are people homeless? People become homeless for a variety of reasons, often outside of their own personal control. Two key reasons have been identified on why people become homeless. The first is a lack of affordable housing. The second is poverty, or the condition of being poor. The government is usually responsible for providing affordable housing to people and families in need. It builds large apartment buildings or housing developments for people who cannot afford to live elsewhere. Sometimes there is not enough affordable housing for all the people who need it. Those who are unable to secure housing may become homeless.

Homelessness and poverty are quite clearly linked. Poor people must often choose between such important things as buying food or paying for medical care versus paying the rent. When poor people are faced with these difficult decisions, housing is often the first expense to be dropped because it generally requires the largest amount of money. Many of

the homeless in America are simply unable to find jobs due to a lack of opportunity. Others are mentally ill or addicted to drugs. Still others who are homeless have previously relied on public assistance but have lost that assistance for one reason or another. An example of a public assistance program is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which provides help for people who struggle to afford healthy and nutritious food.

There are three distinct kinds of homelessness. The first is called *chronic homelessness*, and it represents the group of people who move from shelter to shelter in a seemingly never-ending cycle. Often, the chronically homeless are older and suffer from disabilities or addiction.

The second type of homelessness is called *transitional homelessness*, and it describes people who must enter a shelter for a short period of time. For example, if they are evicted from their homes for not being able to pay the rent, they might go into a shelter or enter government-based transitional housing. They may live there for up to two years until they are able to get back on their feet.

The third kind of homelessness is called *episodic homelessness*, which accounts for people who move in and out of shelters at various points throughout their life. Those who experience episodic homelessness usually have difficulty maintaining steady employment. People who are considered transitionally homeless and those who are episodically homeless are often young.

Homelessness rises when people are unable to find or keep jobs. But it also affects people who are not even employed in the first place: children under sixteen years old. As minors, they are not legally allowed to work. According to the National Center on Family Homelessness, one in every 45 children experiences homelessness each year. Most families that experience homelessness are made up of a mother and her children. The National Center on Family Homelessness reports that 29 percent of adults in homeless families in the United States are working. Yet the wages are often not enough to support the various needs of a family, like healthcare, food, and shelter. Furthermore, many families try to stay out of shelters. Shelters can be noisy, overcrowded, and stressful places for both children and parents. These families would often rather stay at the homes of friends or relatives, or even sleep in their cars. Families that experience homelessness in any situation are under a ton of stress, due to the lack of stability and privacy.

There are no simple solutions to this major social issue. But homelessness affects too many people around the world to be ignored.

## Questions: About Homelessness

1. A cause of someone not paying their rent is being unemployed. What is an effect of not paying rent?
  - A) He or she may become addicted to drugs.
  - B) He or she may not be able to get a job.
  - C) He or she could be evicted from their home.
  - D) He or she may need to pay for medical care.
  
2. The lack of affordable housing is a contributing factor in the problem of homelessness. What evidence from the passage best supports this conclusion?
  - A) Sometimes there are more people who need affordable housing than available housing.
  - B) The government is responsible for providing affordable housing to the families in need.
  - C) The government builds housing developments for people who cannot afford to live elsewhere.
  - D) Poor people often have to choose between paying the rent and buying food.
  
3. Read the following sentences: "Furthermore, many families try to stay out of shelters. Shelters can be noisy, overcrowded, and stressful places for both children and parents. These families would often rather stay at the homes of friends or relatives, or even sleep in their cars."

Based on this information, what can you conclude?

- A) Many families consider sleeping in their cars to be their last choice.
- B) The majority of people who stay in homeless shelters are not families.
- C) The people who stay in homeless shelters would rather stay on the streets.
- D) Many families think staying with friends will be less stressful than a shelter.

4. Read the following sentences: "Still others who are homeless have previously relied on public **assistance** but have lost that **assistance** for one reason or another. An example of a public **assistance** program is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which provides help for people who struggle to afford healthy and nutritious food."

As used in these sentences, what does the word "**assistance**" most nearly mean?

- A) disturbance
- B) something free
- C) help or support
- D) obstacle

5. According to the passage, how are poverty and homelessness directly linked?

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6. Explain how the problem of homelessness could be helped or reduced. Support your answer using information from the passage.

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## Who Speaks for the Animals?

Rachel Howard



It was just another hot day during a humid summer in New York City. The beaches were crowded with families, and the air-conditioned subways promised a welcome respite from the heat, that is, until a woman entered a northbound train just after midnight and was confronted by an odd smell. When she looked around the train, she noticed something lying on the floor under one of the seat banks. “I board a car that’s not terribly full,” she is reported by the publication *Gothamist* as saying, “and as soon as I enter, a stench hits my nose. It’s not the typical...urine/trash smell...it’s...fishy? I look down to the end of the car to see a dead shark on the floor.”

Questions swirled online and in the news: Where did this shark come from? How had it gotten onto the subway? How had it died? It was a curiosity that stumped anyone who’d heard about the strange incident. Photographs popped up online of the gray creature, which was about four feet long. Spectators posed the shark in a variety of ways: one of the more popular images that circulated online was a photo of a MetroCard—a card allowing entrance to the subway—on the floor next to the shark, as if it had entered the subway voluntarily.

The Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA), responsible for the care and maintenance of the New York City subway system, was luckily equipped to deal with the deceased shark. It is reported that at Queensboro Plaza, a major transportation hub, the MTA authorities ordered everyone off the train in order to handle the situation at hand. What to do with a dead shark? The MTA authorities disposed of the body.

Still, the questions remained unanswered. Even though the subway train was clean and fishy stench-free, many in New York continued to wonder what had happened to the shark and how it ended up on a subway. Due to the amount of attention the story received online and on television news, someone was sure to come forward with the story of how the shark ended up taking a ride on the N train.

Some questions were finally answered when a woman recognized the shark in pictures from the subway as the same shark her kids had taken pictures of that same day, after it had washed ashore on Coney Island, a beach at the bottom tip of Brooklyn. Her neighbor's daughter had even picked up the corpse for a photograph. Images of the shark hanging in the air, held by a brown-haired girl in sunglasses, began to appear online, corroborating the woman's story.

Apparently the shark had washed ashore sometime in the afternoon, and it was already deceased. Beachgoers showed intense interest in the small shark, taking pictures and congregating around it for a time. After a while, someone picked it up and took it to Luna Park, the amusement park located just north of the beach at Coney Island. It was left on the ground by the old wooden roller coaster, when apparently someone else decided to take it home and instead, left it on the subway.

This incident brings a number of issues to light, not only about the shark and its death, but about the way city dwellers think of and act toward wildlife. To a certain extent, the appearance of a wild animal, even a dead one, is an exciting and unusual occurrence in a city.

The desire to photograph it, play with it, even to take it home is, on some level, understandable—where else in a city of millions of people can one experience a creature from the marine wild in a similar way? Aquariums and zoos, in protecting the animals that live in their sanctuaries, rarely, if ever, allow visitors to handle the animals.

At issue too is the sad disregard for an animal's death that was exhibited by the people who played with its corpse. The question, "What would you do?" begs to be asked. We are told not to approach or ever touch a wild animal, even if it looks friendly. It could be carrying disease or ready to attack, no matter how sweet it appears to be. Why do we not have a similar approach to dead animals? When does it become okay to disturb wildlife? Even the photographs that were posted on the Internet in some way disturbed the death of the shark, which was taken all over the city rather than left on the beach and in the ocean where it belonged.

What remains to be seen is whether there will be any public outcry about the situation: who will speak for the animals?



Questions: Who Speaks for the Animals?

1. Subway goers were surprised by and interested in the dead shark on the train. What details from the text support this statement?
  - A) The shark was found on the N train.
  - B) The MTA ordered everyone off the train so that they could dispose of the shark.
  - C) People took pictures of the shark and posted them online.
  - D) The shark was already dead when it had washed ashore.
2. Read the following sentences: "At issue too is the sad disregard for an animal's death that was exhibited by the people who played with its corpse. The question, 'what would you do?' begs to be asked."

How does the author feel about the treatment of the dead shark?

- A) unhappy
  - B) indifferent
  - C) supportive
  - D) surprised
3. Read the following sentences: "Some questions were finally answered when a woman recognized the shark in the pictures from the subway as the same shark her kids had taken pictures of that same day, after it had washed ashore on Coney Island, a beach at the bottom tip of Brooklyn. Her neighbor's daughter had even picked up the corpse for a photograph. Images of the shark hanging in the air, held by a brown-haired girl in sunglasses, began to appear online, **corroborating** the woman's story."

What does "**corroborating**" mean?

- A) imitating
- B) confirming
- C) destroying
- D) disproving

4. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

We are told not to approach or touch a wild animal, \_\_\_\_\_ many people picked up the dead shark and played with it.

- A) yet
- B) so
- C) before
- D) namely

5. Why were spectators so interested in the dead shark? What evidence from the text illustrates this?

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6. Was it wrong for people to carry around the dead shark, play with its corpse, pose with it, and post pictures of it on the Internet? Why or why not? Support your answer with details from the text.

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## The Inside Scoop

By Michael Stahl



In New York City, one of the most popular brands of ice cream comes from a company called Mister Softee. Mister Softee sells ice cream to children and adults alike right out of a large blue-and-white truck. One particular Mister Softee truck driver is named Gus Elefantis. He has not only made Mister Softee ice cream his career, but the tasty, smooth ice cream has helped him make a few friends, too, since he first bought a truck in the mid-1980s.

Gus Elefantis's summer days begin at about 8 a.m. when he and his wife Lola wake up to make breakfast for their two daughters. Once breakfast is finished, Gus and Lola leave their daughters at home (the oldest daughter is 18 years old and capable of babysitting) and drive 20 minutes to a very special parking lot. It is there where Gus parks his very own Mister Softee ice cream truck every night alongside about a dozen others.

As soon as they arrive, Lola begins cleaning and stocking his truck, inserting all of the local favorite types of ice cream pops and flavored frozen ices into specific freezer compartments to be sold once Gus drives along his route. "Everything's in the same place every day," says the short, blonde lady. "This way, my husband doesn't even have to think!"

Gus agrees, saying he won't even need to glance inside the freezer as he fills orders for the long lines of customers waiting on the sidewalks.

Watching his wife wipe down the sink, the refrigerator and the slushy machine, Gus explains that Lola has cleaned the truck for over 20 years, ever since they were first married. "She's the best at it," he says with a heavy Greek accent. "I've tried to clean the truck plenty of times before, but I'm no good at it. When Lola cleans, it is spotless."

Gus's morning duty is to "go shopping" and purchase any new stock the truck needs for the day. He buys these items from his old friend Dimitri Tsirkos, who got Gus into the business and now runs the Mister Softee station. The station consists of a few parking lots for the trucks and a store where drivers buy supplies. Into a shopping cart Gus loads a few cartons of chocolate and vanilla ice cream mix, which will later freeze up inside the truck's dispenser machine. He adds a can of whipped cream, some blue paper cups and a gallon of strawberry syrup.

Lola has finished cleaning Gus's truck. Tupperware containers of sprinkles are filled. Gallons of milk are placed just behind a steel refrigerator door at Gus's feet. Chocolate sauce that hardens when chilled is poured into a bowl for Dip Cones. The truck is finally ready.

After unplugging the back of the truck from a wall outlet that is used to keep the refrigerators and freezers inside running overnight, then starting up and revving the engine for a while to warm it up (the truck itself is over 30 years old), Gus drives out of the garage to sell ice cream in the neighborhood he's called home for over 40 years: Astoria, New York. Gus will spend between nine and ten hours driving around, jumping from the driver's seat to the serving window countless times. This takes a toll on a big man's body. "You're walking on steel all day," he says. "Talk to any Mister Softee driver and they'll tell you that their legs from the knees down are a problem."

Though there is an air conditioner in the truck that isn't completely useless, its work is made more difficult by the heat coming from the refrigerators, not to mention the sweltering humidity in New York City's summer air. The back of the truck is searing on days when temperatures climb above 95 degrees, which are also some of the least profitable days because customers stay inside their air-conditioned homes. Naturally, rainy days hurt business as well. How much money the drivers make changes from year to year, depending on the weather. Gus remembers one year, though, when the weather was so cooperative, he started driving in February and didn't stop until Thanksgiving! "I made a lot of money that year," he says with a nod of his head.

Usually, Gus doesn't drive the Mister Softee truck for more than six months a year. He works every day it doesn't rain between April and October, unless there is an important family event or holiday like Greek Easter. A day spent inside his home is a day he's not making money, so he'll put in 12-hour days as often as he possibly can. On those days he misses his daughters, Joann, the older one, and Nora, who is eight.

After a long summer season and parking his truck for winter, Gus searches for a new winter job to provide for his family. "Once I drove a cab, but that was too much driving in one year for me," he laughs. "Usually, I work part-time in construction or at a restaurant just like when I was young." In some ways, he would love a stable, everyday job, he says. But with Mister Softee, he's his own boss, which has its perks.

"I eat ice cream every day," Gus says, admitting that he dips into his own supply, usually after accidentally making something a customer didn't ask for, like a cone with chocolate sprinkles instead of rainbow. "I feel like I have to eat the mistakes. I don't want them to go to waste!"

When he's had enough ice cream for the day, he gives his errors away, no charge. Gus loves giving away free ice cream, which has gotten him a lot of fans. However, the people of Astoria don't go to his truck just for ice cream—whether it's free or not—they also go to see their friend.

"My husband loves everyone," says Lola. "Adults, kids, pets. It doesn't matter."

The side windows of the truck have few stickers, making it easy to see into the back where Gus works. This was done on purpose. He feels it makes parents much more comfortable dealing with him because it shows he has nothing to hide. Gus doesn't drive his route late at night because he knows the truck's song will get kids to jump out of bed. During the daytime, he plays the song only once per block to limit the disturbance.

"My mother always told me that if you live in a glass house, don't throw stones at your neighbors. And I live in a glass house," he says, referring to his windowed truck. He calls the job "easy," despite the long hours away from his daughters while they're on summer vacation, the heat, the hurt in his legs, and the requirement of a new job every winter. But Gus Elefantis isn't going anywhere, to the delight of the many Astorians with which he comes into daily summer contact. "Unless I hit the lotto," he says, "which I don't play, I'm not going to stop."

Questions: The Inside Scoop

1. The text states, “He calls the job ‘easy,’ **despite** the long hours away from his daughters while they’re on summer vacation, the heat, the hurt in his legs, and the requirement of a new job every winter.”

What does the word “**despite**” mean?

- A) because of
- B) regardless of
- C) due to
- D) since

2. Gus’s wife, Lola, states, “My husband loves everyone. Adults, kids, pets. It doesn’t matter.” What actions does Gus take to make sure that parents are happy with his service?

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3. Gus says that, in some ways, he would love a stable, everyday job. Why does he choose to be an ice cream truck driver instead? Support your answer with evidence from the passage.

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4. The weather plays a great role in the success of Gus's business. Cite two pieces of evidence that back up this statement.

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# Is Big Tobacco Out to Hook Kids?

*By Dan Risch*

## **Teens are working to make underage smoking a thing of the past.**

Teens across the nation are burning up about the number of young people who start smoking each year.

"Whether tobacco companies admit it or not, they do market to kids," says Jeffrey Tice, a West Virginia teen fighting against tobacco use. You might say Tice's proof is in the puffing. In his state alone, more than 2,000 kids younger than 18 become smokers each year, statistics show, and the situation there is not that different from other areas of the country.

Teens start smoking even though national and state laws forbid the marketing and sale of tobacco products to youths. Tobacco companies, sometimes known collectively as Big Tobacco, cannot use cartoon characters or celebrities to advertise their products to kids, nor can stores sell tobacco products to kids.

Tobacco companies say they follow the laws, and some information supports that. Since 1997, for instance, when as part of a big legal settlement cigarette manufacturers said they wouldn't advertise to kids, cigarette sales have dropped 21 percent.

Although direct, obvious advertising to kids doesn't happen today, some people think something is going on.

"We believe that marketing is geared toward youth," says David Deutsch, manager at the West Virginia Division of Tobacco Prevention. Deutsch explains that although tobacco advertising is not aimed at children, it can still catch their attention.

## **Trouble in Disguise**

Many of Big Tobacco's newer products come loaded with kid appeal, say teen advocates. Young people sometimes buy them because they're packaged to look like candies, mints, and gum. Some even taste like candy.

"It's really sneaky," claims Judy Hou, 17. Judy is spreading the word in Virginia about how kids can get hooked on tobacco products such as snus, rubs, orbs, and sticks. Those products are either rubbed on the skin or



dissolved in the mouth to deliver nicotine, the addictive chemical in tobacco. And because they are smokeless and spit-free, they can be used anywhere, anytime.

In his own school, Jeffrey Tice sees how easily teens can use and become addicted to nicotine with the new products. "Kids sit in school 180 days out of the year. If you have an orb or a stick, you can pop it in your mouth and get your nicotine fix. No one ever knows," he says.

Why does the tobacco industry need people to get addicted to its products? "If tobacco companies gave up on getting new customers, they would soon be out of business," says tobacco ad expert Connie Pechmann, a professor at the Paul Merage School of Business at the University of California, Irvine.

Judy puts it more bluntly. "What they are trying to do is create a new generation of smokers," she says. "Tobacco companies need a new generation of smokers to buy their products. It's all about making money."

## **Making a Difference**

Making money off teens is a little harder now thanks to Calitta Jones, Brian Bell, Jeremiah Carter, and Shanicee Dillon. As part of a tobacco prevention program in their hometown of St. Paul, Minn., the students surveyed neighborhood stores for tobacco advertising and products they felt were aimed at kids.

Instead of advertising, however, they stumbled upon something that left the group horrified. Dillon's 2-year-old sister got her hands on some candy cigarettes and toy cigarette lighters. She thought it was fun to "play" at puffing and blowing smoke. A video produced by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids captures the team's reaction: "Candy and cigarettes together? Seriously not OK," Dillon says in the video.

So Dillon and her teammates powered up. With the help of St. Paul Councilmember Melvin Carter III, they worked to pass a city law banning the sale of candy cigarettes and toy lighters. With Carter's encouragement, the students met with the St. Paul city attorney to draft the law. They then asked for support from the mayor and the other members of the city council, and packed a public hearing about the proposed law with 150 of their friends.

Thanks to Dillon and her friends, it passed—easily. Other cities are considering following St. Paul's example.

Melvin Carter says he is proud they were able to put the ban in place. And, he insists, all the credit belongs to the teens who came to him. "My office guided them through the process," he says. "I wanted them to learn they can change the law."

"Kids have power when it comes to public policy ... if they're willing to roll up their sleeves and get at it," Melvin Carter adds. "Young people have the ability to look around their community, figure out the problems, and solve them."

## Get Involved

Judy Hou's grandfather, a smoker for many years, died of lung cancer. Judy has never forgotten what she believes took her grandpa away from her. "I saw how horrible tobacco products are, not just for the smoker, but also for our family," she recalls.



Page  
Dowdy/Chesterfield  
Observer  
Judy Hou is a teen  
activist.

When she got to high school, Judy joined Virginia's youth-led campaign to fight tobacco use and promote healthy living, Y Street. Recently, Y Street focused on halting the spread of nicotine products aimed at children. "These products are packaged like candy, mints, or gum and made to appeal to kids. The tobacco companies know they can take advantage of us," says Judy. "That needs to end!"

As a seventh grader, Jeffrey Tice learned what cigarettes do to people's lungs. Teen volunteers with RAZE, a West Virginia program that fights

tobacco use, visited his class. (The word *raze* means “tear down.”) They showed students pig lungs that were supposed to mimic smokers’ lungs. “They’re discolored,” he recalled. “They don’t inflate all the way and not quickly. They’re disgusting!”

Tice, now 18, is a youth leader with RAZE, taking up the campaign against tobacco use. “Our main goal at RAZE is to tear down the lies of the tobacco industry,” he explains. Tice believes that young people, when told the truth, will see how harmful tobacco is.

Judy agrees. “Kids need to take a stand,” she says. “Kids need to know they can make a difference. I’ve learned that I can make a difference.”

Questions: Is Big Tobacco Out to Hook Kids?

1. After reading the passage, what can you conclude about tobacco products?
  - A) All tobacco products contain nicotine and are addictive.
  - B) Smokeless and spit-free tobacco products are not addictive.
  - C) Teens can't get hooked on certain types of tobacco products.
  - D) Cigarettes that contain less nicotine are not that addictive.
  
2. Read these sentences from the passage: "Judy puts it more bluntly. 'What they are trying to do is create a new generation of smokers,' she says." "Tobacco companies need a new generation of smokers to buy their products. It's all about making money."

In this sentence, the word **bluntly** means

- A) directly
  - B) innocently
  - C) delicately
  - D) eagerly
  
3. Which statement supports the main idea of the passage?
  - A) Teens are working to make underage smoking a thing of the past.
  - B) In West Virginia, more than 2,000 kids are becoming smokers each year.
  - C) Some kids get hooked on tobacco products that dissolve in the mouth.
  - D) Tobacco companies want to gain new customers to buy their products.
  
4. According to the passage, what happened to cigarette sales when cigarette manufacturers agreed to stop advertising to kids?

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5. The first paragraph starts with this sentence: "Teens across the nation are burning up about the number of young people who start smoking each year." What did the writer mean by the words "burning up"? Why do you think the writer chose those words?

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# Where Does Your Food Come From?

*By Kathiann M. Kowalski*

## Local VS. Long-Distance—Does It Matter?

Before you know it, spring will be on the way and more fresh fruits and veggies will be in stores. But what about the fresh fruits and vegetables we see in the stores right now? Where do those foods come from? Locally grown foods are a great choice when they're available, but are they really always better?

## Why Buy Local?

Taste is the reason Ohio teen Allie M. says she prefers locally grown peaches to ones that might travel more than a thousand miles to the supermarket. "They have to pick them so unripe to ship them, so they don't spoil," says Allie. "They're not as good as they would be if you went to the farmers market during peak season and bought fresh peaches."

When fruits and vegetables taste better, you'll probably eat them more often. That's good, because the U.S. Department of Agriculture recommends filling half your plate with fruits and vegetables.

While there's no clear definition of what's local, most shoppers agree that produce grown nearby is fresher than foods that travel long distances.

Local foods can be more nutritious too. "The longer it takes for a food to go from the field to your plate, the more it may deteriorate in terms of nutrient content," explains Mary Lee Chin, a registered dietitian at Nutrition Edge Communications in Denver. "But a lot of it depends on many different factors." Soil conditions, fertilization practices, irrigation methods, and the specific plant varieties can all affect nutrient content.

"Handling is really critical," adds Chin. That includes everything that happens from harvest until foods reach your home. When fruits and vegetables are at peak ripeness and handled properly, the results can be both delicious and nutritious. But bruised, wilted, or overripe produce loses both appeal and nutrient value.

Buying local foods also lets shoppers support the local economy. That builds feelings of community. "You know who grows your food," says Allie.

Local farmers markets may spotlight produce that an area is famous for, such as Michigan cherries or Georgia peaches. You might also discover varieties not usually carried by supermarkets, such as some heirloom tomatoes or fresh herbs.

Some vendors sell only "organic" foods. Organic produce usually isn't more nutritious than other fruits and vegetables. To receive official certification, farms follow specific guidelines, such as not using certain pesticides or fertilizers. (Some farms don't go through the certification process but still may produce food according to organic practices.)

Energy usage is another environmental issue. Local foods travel a shorter distance to market, so less fuel is required to deliver the food. However, notes Chin, the type of transportation matters. For a 100-mile trip, for instance, a typical pickup truck uses more than 10 times the fuel per pound carried than a full semitrailer. Farming practices, water usage, and other factors affect foods' environmental impact too.

### **Variety Is the Spice of Life**

Not all our favorite foods can come from local farms. Allie loves bananas, but they don't grow in Ohio. And forget about finding fresh Ohio-grown melons, strawberries, or peaches during winter.

"In my opinion, it's not possible to have the lifestyle we enjoy and rely only on locally grown foods," says Trevor Suslow, an agricultural scientist at the University of California, Davis. "In order to enjoy a year-round supply of healthful, nutritious, good-tasting, enjoyable diverse foods, they are being grown, harvested, and then shipped tens of thousands of miles." Refrigerated storage and transport make it possible.

Don't rule out frozen, canned, or dried fruits and vegetables. Many companies run processing plants close to farms for cost and efficiency reasons. Other benefits are more obvious to the consumer. Not only are the nutrients of fresh fruits preserved, says Chin, but sensory qualities of appearance, smell, and taste remain too. A jar of applesauce serves many people and delivers almost the same health benefits per serving as fresh apples—that's something to consider when money is tight.

## The Bottom Line

While local foods aren't always better than long-distance ones, one thing is clear: "Research has shown that people who eat the highest amount of fruits and vegetables simply have healthier diets," says Chin. You can get those health benefits "no matter how they're produced."

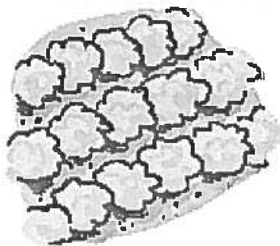
Food safety is also an issue regardless of where foods come from. Recent government recalls involved a wide range of foods, including fresh strawberries, organic spinach, packaged salads, papayas, bean burgers, cheese, and herring.

"Contaminated food can look and smell and taste completely normal," warns Dr. Karen Neil at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Symptoms of illness may not appear for days.

To protect yourself, always follow safe food handling and storage practices. After all, no matter where your food starts out, it ends up with you.

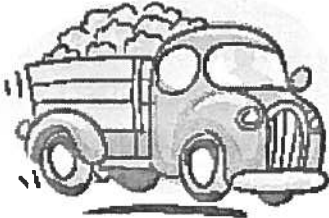
## Follow That Food!

**More than two weeks can pass before food from the field finally finds its way to your home. Consider how lettuce might get from a California farm to a Boston supermarket.**



From the field to a nearby cooling facility **(1–2 days)**

Dave Clegg



Onto a truck to a packaging and distribution center **(1–2 days)**

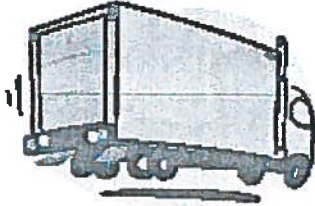
Dave Clegg





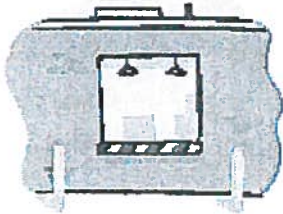
Packaging or processing (1–2 days)

Dave Clegg



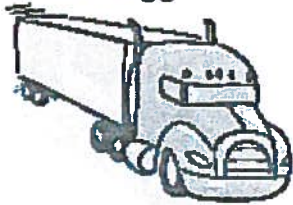
Onto a truck to go across the country (5–7 days)

Dave Clegg



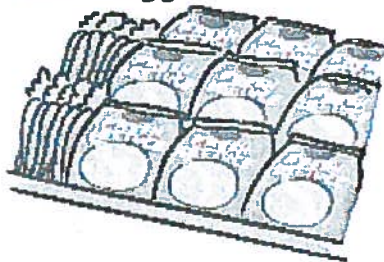
To a regional distribution center (1–2 days)

Dave Clegg



To another truck for delivery to a local supermarket (1 day)

Dave Clegg



On the supermarket shelves until purchase (1–4 days)

Dave Clegg

### **Cook It Safe!**

Frozen food may spend days traveling so you can quickly “nuke” it when you’re ready. But be sure you’re doing it safely. Diane Van of the U.S. Department of Agriculture offers these tips for safe microwaving:

**Know whether to use the microwave or the conventional oven.** Not all frozen foods can be cooked safely in the microwave.

**Know your microwave wattage before microwaving food.** Lower-wattage ovens need more cooking time.

**Read and follow cooking instructions.** That includes waiting the full standing time listed on a package after the item comes out of the oven to ensure it's done cooking.

**Always use a food thermometer to ensure a safe internal temperature.** Grill marks or browning may make food appear cooked before it really is.

Questions: Where Does Your Food Come From?

1. Which of the following is an *argument* presented against buying local fruits and vegetables?

- A) Local foods travel a shorter distance to market.
- B) Local farmers may spotlight a produce that an area is famous for.
- C) Local produce is fresher than foods that travel long distances.
- D) Local farms cannot produce all of our favorite foods all year.

2. “The longer it takes for a food to go from the field to your plate, the more it may **deteriorate** in terms of nutrient content,” explains Mary Lee Chin.”

As used in the sentence, **deteriorate** most nearly means

- A) to improve
- B) to recover
- C) to get worse
- D) to adjust

3. This passage deals primarily with

- A) the local vs. long-distance food debate.
- B) the ways to keep your food safe.
- C) the length of time it takes to get lettuce from the farm.
- D) the best procedure for using the microwave.

4. What are the benefits that the passage gives for buying local fruits and vegetables?

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5. Why might “buying local” be easier in some places than others?

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