

Epreuve écrite

Examen de fin d'études secondaires 2015

Section: BCDEFG

Branche: Anglais

Numéro d'ordre du candidat

If you must eat meat, save it for Christmas

What can you say about a society whose food production must be hidden from public view? In which the factory farms and slaughterhouses must be guarded to prevent us from seeing what happens there?

It begins with the stories we tell. Many of the books written for very young children are about farms, but these jolly places in which animals wander freely, as if they belong to the farmer's family, bear no relationship to the realities of production. The petting farms to which we take our children support these fantasies.

Labelling reinforces the deception. While the production method must be marked on egg boxes in the EU, there are no such conditions on meat and milk. Meaningless labels such as "natural" and "farm fresh", and worthless symbols such as green trees, distract us from the realities.

The growth rate of chickens has quadrupled in 50 years: they are now killed at seven weeks. By then they are often crippled by their own weight. Animals selected for obesity cause obesity. Scarcely able to move, overfed, factory-farmed chickens now contain almost three times as much fat as chickens did in 1970, and just two thirds of the protein.

Sustaining unhealthy animals in crowded sheds requires lots of antibiotics. These drugs also promote growth, a use that remains legal in the United States and widespread in the European Union, under the guise of disease control. In 1953 some MPs warned that this could cause the emergence of disease-resistant bacteria. Nobody believed them. But they were right.

This system is also devastating the land and the sea. Farm animals consume one third of global cereal production, 90% of soya meal and 30% of the fish caught. Were the grain now used to fatten animals reserved instead for people, an extra 1.3 billion could be fed. Meat for the rich means hunger for the poor.

What comes out is as bad as what goes in. The manure from factory farms is spread ostensibly* as fertiliser, but often in greater volumes than crops can absorb: arable land is used as a dump. It flows into rivers and the sea, creating dead zones. It is madness, and there is no anticipated end to it: the world's livestock population is expected to rise by 70% by 2050.

So why don't we stop? Because we don't know the facts, and because we find it difficult even if we do. A survey by the US Humane Research Council discovered that only 2% of Americans are vegetarians or vegans, and more than half give up within a year. One of the main reasons, the survey found, is that people want to fit in.

I believe that one day artificial meat will become commercially viable, and that it will change social norms. When it becomes possible to eat meat without keeping and slaughtering livestock, live production will soon be perceived as unacceptable. But this is a long way off. Until then, perhaps the best strategy is to encourage people to eat as our ancestors did. Rather than mindlessly consuming meat at every meal, we should think of it as an extraordinary gift: a privilege, not a right. We could reserve meat for special occasions, such as Christmas, and otherwise eat it no more than once a month.

All children should be taken by their schools to visit a factory pig or chicken farm, and to an abattoir, where they should be able to witness every stage of slaughter. If we cannot bear to see what we eat, it is not the seeing that's wrong, it's the eating.

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I Comprehension (30 marks)

Answer the following questions with reference to the text. Use your own words as far as possible.

1. How are the realities of meat production being covered up? (8 marks)
2. How are animals mistreated? (6 marks)
3. What negative effects does meat production have on people and the environment? (8 marks)
4. What are the prognostics for the future and what solutions does the author propose to improve the situation? (8 marks)

II Development Essay (30 marks)

Write a well-structured essay of 250-350 words on the following. Indicate the number of words you have used.

What impacts does global trade have on people's lives ?