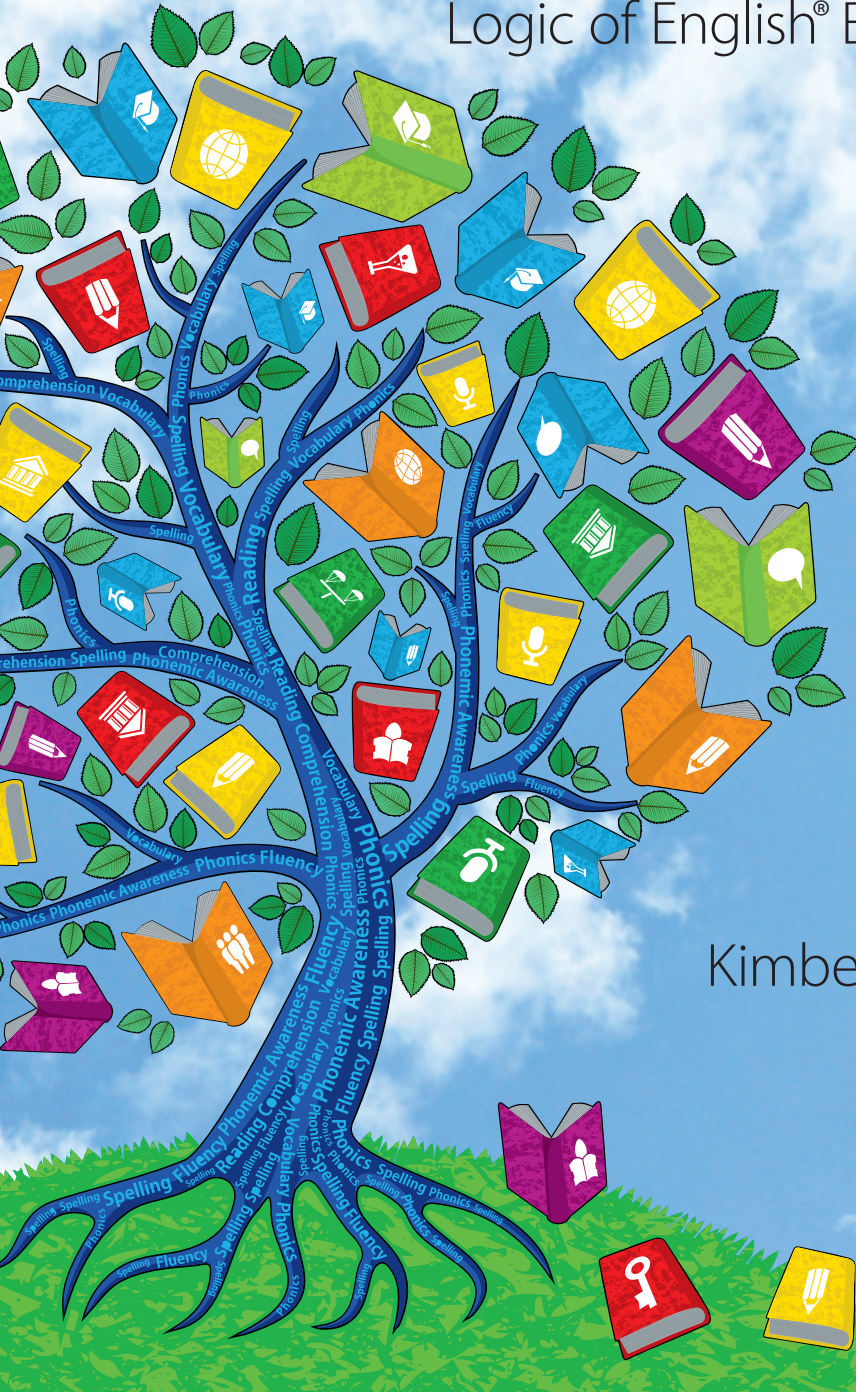


# The Essentials Reader

Readings to Accompany  
Logic of English® Essentials



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# The Story of Chocolate

**T**he average American **consumes** twelve pounds of chocolate each year! But how much do you know about chocolate? What is in chocolate? How is it made? Who makes it? You might be surprised what you can learn about this popular treat!

## Cocoa or cacao?

**Cacao** (că că ă) was the original word and spelling. Like many words, it changed with time. The spelling **cocoa** (cō cōă) probably began when early English traders misspelled the word *cacao*. Today, *cacao* mostly refers to the trees and the seeds. *Cocoa* mostly refers to the powder that is made from the seeds.

## From Cacao Trees to Chocolate Candy

Chocolate is made from the seeds of the cacao tree. Cacao trees grow in warm, humid rainforests. Although cacao trees first grew in South America, today western Africa has the most cacao tree farms.

The cacao tree produces a fruit called a



Cacao pods

cacao pod. A cacao pod is about the size of a coconut and has points on each end, like an American football. A farmer picks the pods off the tree and opens them up. Inside the pod, thick white



Cacao seeds surrounded by thick, white pulp

pulp surrounds 30-50 seeds, or cacao beans. This is enough to make about 7 bars of milk chocolate or 2 bars of dark chocolate. The farmer removes the cacao beans from the pod and lets them sit for a week to bring out the chocolate flavor. Then the farmer spreads them out in the sun to dry. Afterward, the dry beans get shipped to a chocolate factory.

The chocolate factory roasts, shells, and grinds



Cacao pods with seeds

up the cacao beans. Then the ground up cacao beans go through a process that separates the cocoa powder





## The History of Chocolate

Chocolate was discovered around 1500 BCE in the Amazon rainforest of South America. The Mayans (600 BCE) and the Aztecs (400 CE) began to cultivate cacao trees. The cocoa was used to make a bitter, unsweetened drink.

In 1528, a Spanish explorer named Cortez brought cocoa back to Spain. The Spanish added sweetener, vanilla, and cinnamon. The king and his court enjoyed the drink so much, it became the secret drink of the Spanish Court.

In the 1600s and 1700s chocolate sales expanded. France, England, Italy, and the Netherlands began to open chocolate shops.

The process for making chocolate continued to change and develop. In the 1800s, chocolate makers discovered how to turn chocolate into a solid and make chocolate candy. Later, milk chocolate was created by adding powdered milk to it. By the early 1900s, lots of different businesses had started making chocolate. Chocolate became popular around the world.

(the part of the seed that has the chocolate flavor) from the cocoa butter (the part of the seed that is a fat). Finally, the cocoa powder is sweetened and mixed with other ingredients such as milk powder and turned into chocolate candy.

## The Chocolate Industry Today

Chocolate is popular all around the world. This means producing chocolate is a big **industry**. If a company can convince **consumers** to purchase its chocolate, that company can get very rich. Each company competes with many others to sell more chocolate and make more profit. In order to make the most profit, a company needs to sell a lot of chocolate. The company also needs to keep its own cost of making chocolate low.



Cacao beans drying  
in the sun

Sadly, many businesses that make chocolate keep costs low by mistreating the cacao bean farmers. Many farmers get paid such a small amount for the cacao beans that it is difficult for them to pay for enough food and decent housing.

In many places, school

is not free. When the farmers are not paid well enough for the cacao beans, the farmers cannot afford to send children to school. In fact, many children have no choice but to work on the family cacao farm all day, every day, just to help the family pay for food and housing.

At times, children even get taken from home to live and work as slaves on cacao farms. The children work long, hard hours every day, without being allowed to go home.

Since the children do not get paid, businesses do not have to pay as much for the cacao beans. The businesses can then sell the chocolate more cheaply, so more consumers purchase it. But it is cheap at a great cost to the children.



Cacao trees grow best and produce the most cacao beans when surrounded by a rainforest. The shade provided by other trees and the rainforest animals help the cacao trees grow well and protect them from diseases. Sadly, however, many farmers have destroyed parts of the rainforest in order to plant more cacao trees, not realizing the problems that result in the end.

However, other businesses work hard to treat workers fairly. The workers get paid fair wages. This allows them to have decent homes and good food. And the workers can afford to send children to school. On these farms, nobody is a slave. In order to do this, the company has to pay the farmers more for the cacao beans. This means it costs the company more to make the chocolate. And it costs the consumer more to purchase the chocolate.

Each time chocolate is purchased, the consumer makes a choice. The consumer chooses to purchase



chocolate from a company that treats its workers fairly or to purchase chocolate from a company that pays poor wages. These choices have a huge impact on the businesses that make chocolate and on the lives of cacao farmers.

When a consumer purchases chocolate from a company that is not treating its workers fairly, the company is not motivated to change. When consumers stop purchasing chocolate from businesses that do not treat workers fairly, those businesses need to



change or the company will not have customers. But many consumers do not know how chocolate is produced, or how the company treats its farmers. Many consumers just purchase whichever chocolate is cheapest.



However, when consumers decide to purchase chocolate from a company that treats its farmers and workers fairly, consumers can make a difference in the lives of cacao farmers. Many of these products have a Fair Trade label. The Fair Trade label means each person working to grow the cacao beans and make the chocolate is treated and paid fairly. As consumers have purchased more fair trade chocolate, businesses have started to notice that consumers care about the treatment of workers. Many businesses have even started to make changes.

Businesses, consumers, and farmers all need to work together to address the problems in the chocolate industry. Hopefully, life for cacao bean farmers will soon be as good as chocolate!