

# COMPREHENSION

Exercise Booklet



# Mayo Clinic Confirms Why Energy Drinks Should be Banned for Kids

POSTED ON MARCH 14, 2015 BY [THE ALTERNATIVE DAILY](#)

It's not only foodstuffs that threaten health but drinks also – soda, sugary juice concoctions and the ever popular energy in a can drinks. We are especially frightened when we see young kids lining up to purchase these energy potions.

Sure, they are alluring – energy in a can... what a novel idea. According to the Food and Drug Administration, energy drinks, non-regulated because they are sold as dietary supplements, have so far been poorly studied for long term effects and actually contain some very potent substances that are dangerous on their own, and of high concern when mixed together.

## **Just how bad are these drinks?**

Between January 1, 2004 and March 10, 2014, the FDA was informed about 241 non-fatal events where consumers experienced high blood pressure, convulsions, heart attacks and other problems after consuming energy drinks. Of these cases, 115 resulted in hospitalization, 15 in disability and one in miscarriage.

A recent report published by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA) found that the number of emergency department visits involving energy drinks doubled from 10,068 visits in 2007 to 20,783 visits in 2011.

Data collected by the Center for Science in the Public Interest shows 34 deaths linked to energy drinks since 2004, and of these, 22 deaths were directly linked to 5-Hour Energy, 11 to Monster and one to Rockstar. Strangely, half of the deaths occurred in 2012.

A [study](#) conducted by the University of Miami reviewed existing literature on the drinks and found that 30-50 percent of adolescents and young adults consume energy drinks on a regular basis.

Energy drinks contain 21 to 34 grams of sugar per each 8-ounce serving, which comes in the form of sucrose, glucose or even high fructose corn syrup. The big problem arises when users down two or three energy drinks – meaning they actually consume 120 mg to 180 mg of sugar – this is 4-6 times the maximum daily recommended intake (which we believe is already too high).

High fructose corn syrup is used to sweeten most processed foods. In fact, high fructose corn syrup is present in foods that would not normally be thought of as sweet foods, such as salad dressing, mayonnaise, soup and numerous other products. High fructose corn syrup is also found in many drinks, such as soda, coffee drinks, high energy drinks and even some fruit drinks.

Consumption of high fructose corn syrup causes body-wide inflammation and may lead to obesity. In high doses it can literally punch holes in the intestinal lining, allowing nasty byproducts of toxic gut bacteria into your system, potentially resulting in obesity, diabetes, cancer, heart disease, dementia and accelerated aging.

In addition, high fructose corn syrup contains contaminants, such as mercury, that are not regulated by the FDA and are highly toxic.

Side effects from consumption include seizures, diabetes, mood and behavioral disorders and cardiac abnormalities. Of the 5,448 caffeine overdoses that were reported in 2007, 46 percent occurred in people under the age of 19. In response to this, sales and advertising has been severely limited in some countries and states.

## **New public release confirms fears regarding energy drinks**

Yesterday, the Mayo Clinic released a public statement which should be taken as a warning – especially for parents of young kids and teens that consume energy drinks.

Mayo Clinic researchers say that healthy young adults who are not used to regular caffeine consumption, experience a concerning rise in resting blood pressure when they consume energy drinks.

In their [study](#), researchers gave a can of a popular energy drink or a placebo drink to young adults aged 19 to 40. Changes in heart rate and blood pressure were noted in each group 30 minutes after consumption of their drink. Results were also compared between participants who drank the equivalent of one cup of coffee per day and those that drank more than one cup of coffee per day.

Not surprisingly, those who consumed the energy drink experienced a marked rise in blood pressure when compared to the placebo group. Here is what really got us: those who consumed less caffeine had almost double the rise in blood pressure compared to those who consumed more than the equivalent of caffeine found in one cup of coffee daily.

*“We know that energy drink consumption is widespread and rising among young people. Concerns about the health safety of energy drinks have been raised. We and others have previously shown that energy drinks increase blood pressure,” says lead author Anna Svatikova, M.D., Ph.D., cardiovascular diseases fellow at the Mayo Clinic. “Now we are seeing that for those not used to caffeine, the concern may be even greater. Consumers should use caution when using energy drinks because they may increase the risk of cardiovascular problems, even*

*among young people.”*

The results of this research will be presented today at the American College of Cardiology’s 64th Annual Scientific Session in San Diego.

Parents, pay special attention to this if you know that your youngsters are consuming energy drinks or even thinking of consuming energy drinks. Sadly, these toxic cocktails can be lethal and we hope that this and other accumulating research will serve as a warning. Don’t let your kids have this stuff – EVER. And... stay clear of Twinkies and the like, as well!

*-The Alternative Daily*

## Questions:

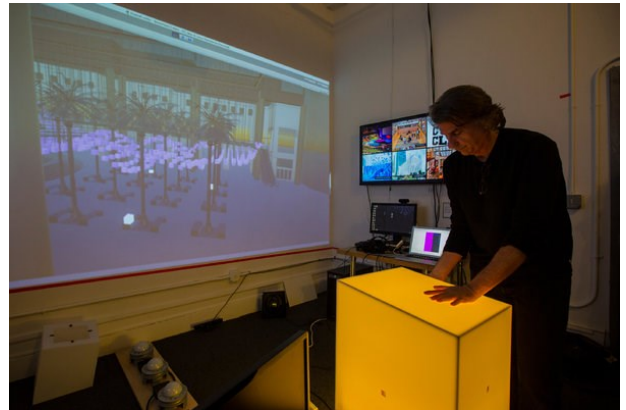
1. What is the article focussed on?
2. What does the article suggest can be the side effects?
3. How does the writer attempt to persuade the reader of the dangers of energy drinks?
4. What does the writer use to evidence their claims?
5. In what ways does the article link the dangers to younger people?

# Basking in a New Holiday Glow, No Evergreen Needed

By JAMES BARRON NOV. 29, 2015

The designer David Rockwell has created high-energy sets for Broadway hits like “[Kinky Boots](#)” and “[Hairspray](#),” and he has given Nobu restaurants and W hotels their flashy looks. But lately he has been telling people he is working on “the living room of Lower Manhattan.”

As living rooms go, this one is big and airy. It is 200 feet long and more than 100 feet wide. It has palm trees.



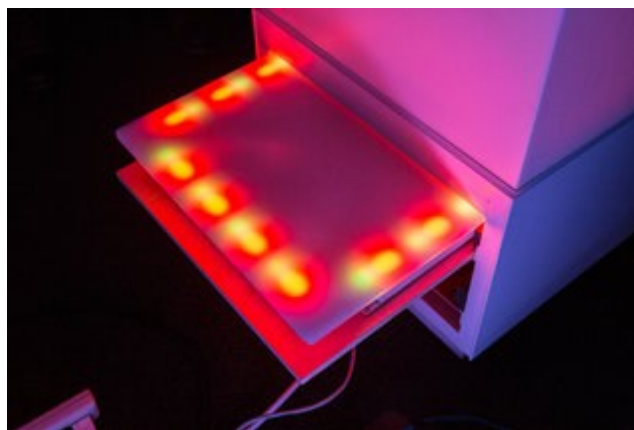
Mr. Rockwell was commissioned to design a holiday display for the Winter Garden in Brookfield Place, the office-and-shopping complex in Battery Park City that was built in the 1980s as the World Financial Center. The capacious Winter Garden has a cascading staircase and a floor-to-ceiling view of the Hudson River, and the assignment reflected a huge ambition: to make the Winter Garden a destination to rival the tree at Rockefeller Center.

Clearly, it called for doing something beyond the familiar approach of erecting a large evergreen.

“It was time to think how to complement the celebration in Midtown,” said Debra Simon, who runs Arts Brookfield, the cultural arm of Brookfield Property Partners, the Canadian developer that owns the Winter Garden and adjacent office buildings. “It’s hard to outdo the tree in terms of a tree, but we have space. We have scale. We have volume.”

It is also situated in a bustling neighborhood, filled with families, workers and visitors drawn to the many places to eat and shop that have opened in recent years. No longer is it a ghost town after the financial markets close. And after being largely abandoned after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, the area now has thousands of apartments, some in new buildings, some in former office fortresses.

With the building boom has come a jump in population, from just under 23,000 in 2000 to 62,000 last year, according to the Alliance for Downtown New York. With new residents joining the continuing parade of office workers, the area has drawn restaurants with celebrity chefs. Its trendiness was ratified with the arrival of the magazine publisher Condé Nast as a main tenant of [1 World Trade Center](#), just across West Street.



This is the time of year when buildings in New York become full-scale ornaments in their own right, with bows in the windows and ribbons stretching all the way from the rafters to the ground, and outsize snowflakes drift over the streets, lit, as they are, by electricity. But even though the Winter Garden is an interior space, Ms. Simon does not see it as a living room, but as “the town green of Lower Manhattan.”

It is a town green with an urban look — marble and glass, not the manicured grass of a New England village surrounded by saltbox houses and churches. It is a town green that was built on

landfill excavated when Battery Park City was going up next door and that was severely damaged when the World Trade Center collapsed.

Mr. Rockwell said he remembered the Winter Garden from its early days in the late 1980s and wanted the holiday project to combine the up-close scale of the Christmas windows in Midtown department stores with the grandeur of the Rockefeller Center tree.

So he floated a canopy of small lights above the palm trees in the Winter Garden — 650 “luminoids,” each as big as a good-size tile on a kitchen floor. From a distance, they look like hanging lanterns, drawing passers-by through the space, from the stairs to the waterfront.

In computer-controlled trial runs, the lights were sometimes a solemn white, sometimes a rollicking red, sometimes a combination of purples, oranges and greens, flashing and changing like the bits of glass in the distant end of a kaleidoscope.

Mr. Rockwell and his crew recorded the installation of the luminoids on a time-lapse video. It shows the structure that had to be assembled and hoisted, like the lighting grids that line the space above a Broadway stage. He and the singer Meghan Trainor will turn on the installation in an invitation-only reception scheduled for Tuesday evening, the night before the lighting of the Rockefeller Center tree, which will be broadcast on television as it has been going back to the days of Howdy Doody. “Luminaries,” as the Brookfield Place lighting array is officially known, will open to the public on Wednesday morning.

Positioned on the floor in the Winter Garden are three “wishing stations” — glowing, touch-sensitive cubes larger than the luminoids. Passers-by can direct the colors of the overhead luminoids from these cubes; each time someone does, Brookfield will make a donation to a program run by the Grammy Foundation that supports music programs in schools.

Mr. Rockwell and Ms. Simon, of Arts Brookfield, describe the installation as being “transformative.” Sometimes transformations take a while to catch on. The Rockefeller Center tree was not always a destination. The first tree, in 1931, put up outdoors in what was then a construction site for the complex, stood behind a clerk handing out workers’ paychecks. In that winter of the Depression, the checks were probably the more powerful symbol. The first tree lighting was organized a couple of years later.

But after more than 80 years, Rockefeller Center is not giving up its crown.

“The Christmas season is truly magical anywhere in New York City,” a spokeswoman for Rockefeller Center said by email, “and we extend our warmest holiday wishes” to Brookfield Place.

## Questions:

1. What is the article about?
2. What is different about the living room?
3. What is the neighbourhood it is situated in like?
4. How was the installation described?
5. How is the Brookfield Place lighting array also known?
6. What is significant about this time of year?
7. Describe the “wishing stations”.
8. How does the Rockefeller Center compare to this installation?
9. How does the writer suggest that this installation is positive?

# BLACK RHINO

## AN ENDANGERED SPECIES

*Craig Kasnoff*

The name “rhino” conjures up the image of a prehistoric beast, a huge creature with skin of armor. This image is not surprising, since these intelligent and affectionate creatures have inhabited the Earth for 60 million years.

An extinct species of rhino that lived in Mongolia, (*Baluchitherium grangeri*), was the largest land mammal of all time. This hornless rhinoceros stood 18 feet (five and one-half meters) at the shoulder, was 27 feet (eight meters) long, and probably weighed 25 tons (23 metric tons), four times as much as today’s African bull elephant.

This species probably died out because of climate change.

The rhino may be the source of the belief in unicorns, legendary animals whose horn was said to be a panacea for all types of ailments. In 1298, the Venetian explorer Marco Polo described Sumatran rhinos as unicorns saying:

*“There are wild elephants in the country, and numerous unicorns, which are very nearly as big. They have hair like that of a buffalo, feet like those of an elephant, and a horn in the middle of the forehead, which is black and very thick.”*

Today, all five species of rhinos are perilously close to extinction. The rate of their decline is truly astounding: in the decade of the 1970s alone, half the world’s rhino population disappeared. Today, less than 15 per cent of the 1970 population remains, an estimated 10,000 to 11,000 worldwide.

The Javan and Sumatran rhinos are near extinction. Indian rhinos may be coming back from the brink. Of the two African species, the white rhino has rebounded from near extinction. (Contrary to its name, the white rhino is not really white. Its name is a mistaken translation of the Dutch word “wilde,” which means “wide” and refers to the rhino’s broad, square lips.)

The black rhino has not fared so well. As recently as 1970, an estimated 65,000 black rhinos could be found throughout sub-Saharan Africa. But in eastern Africa, 90 percent of them were killed in the 1970s. Now there are fewer than 2,500 left, in pockets in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Kenya, Namibia, and Tanzania.

The black rhino grows to 14 feet (four meters) long, stands over 4.5 feet (1 meter) at the shoulder, and weighs up to 3,900 pounds (1770 kg). It is recognizable by its long, pointed, prehensile upper lip and two prominent horns, the longest of which averages 20 inches (50 cm). The horn is made up of millions of tightly compacted hairlike fibers. The black rhino is a formidable herbivore. It inhabits bush country with thick cover, grasslands, or open forest, where it browses on a wide variety of plants.

## Causes of Endangerment

### Overexploitation

Unlike most large mammals, habitat loss has not been a significant factor in the decline of rhinos. Rather, **poaching** for their horn has decimated rhino populations.

As early as the 5th century B.C., rhino horn was believed capable of rendering some poisons harmless. In Borneo, people used to hang a rhino’s tail in a room where a woman was giving birth, believing it would ease labor pains. Asians used rhino horn in traditional medicines for a thousand years without threatening the species’ survival. It was not until the 1970s that rhinos declined dramatically, due to a surprising cause: the soaring price of oil. Young men in the Arab country of Yemen covet rhino horn for elaborately-carved dagger handles, symbols of wealth and status in that country. Until the 1970s, few men could afford these prized dagger handles. But Yemen and other Middle Eastern countries are rich in oil, and prices for this “black gold” climbed dramatically in that decade due to a worldwide oil shortage.



The result was a seven-fold increase in the per capita income in Yemen, a rise in wealth that made rhino horn dagger handles within the reach of almost everyone. This small country, with a population of 6 million at the time, suddenly became the world's largest importer of rhino horn.

The value of rhino horn made it enormously profitable to poach rhinos and sell them on the black market. For example, in 1990, the two horns from a single black rhino brought as much as \$50,000. Just like poaching for [elephant](#) ivory, poaching for rhino horn is simply too profitable for many subsistence farmers and herders to resist.

## Questions:

1. What is the article about?
2. What images does the word 'Rhino' conjure up?
3. Why have some species of Rhino probably died out?
4. What species are doing poorly at the moment?
5. How are Rhinos described?
6. What is the reason behind poaching taking place?
7. How does the writer effectively inform the reader of the current situation for Rhinos?
8. How does the writer suggest things have changed for Rhinos in the last few decades?

# What is the most effective way to help refugees?

William MacAskill



The [picture of three-year-old Aylan Kurdi](#) lying face down on a beach in Turkey has [sparked outrage](#) about the UK's attitude to Syrian refugees. And rightly so. Of the 4 million Syrians who have fled the country, the UK has only [taken in 216](#). This is even though they flee both from Assad's regime and Islamic State, the latter almost a caricature of evil that the UK [may be causally responsible for because of our invasion of Iraq](#).

Given the dire situation of the refugees, a lot of people want to help. But what's the best way to do so?

Doing good is hard, especially in crisis situations. Inevitably, some ways of helping will be more effective than others. Giving musical instruments to those at Calais – as [Music Against Borders is doing](#) – is a kind, well-meaning gesture, but it's hardly providing the refugees with what they most need at this time.

Donating to charities that provide more essential supplies, such as the [International Rescue Committee](#) or the [UN Refugee Agency](#), is more promising. In general, I'm a big proponent of the [power of donations to improve the world](#), and think that such donations will certainly help improve lives. But in this case I think we can do even more good through political action.

Unlike, for example, donations to global health, which help the extremely poor on the road to prosperity, donating to refugee camps is an example of unsustainable charity. With no end to the conflict in sight, Syrian refugee camps would need to be supported perhaps for decades. We do not want to end up with a situation like the [South Sudanese in Kenya or Uganda](#), where children may spend their whole lives in camps.

Even more importantly, now seems to be a prime opportunity for massively beneficial political change. The core message is simple – “let more people in” – so political action is able to send a clear signal to those in power. Yet there is also a deeper policy proposal that we could stand behind: change the law to allow refugees with pending asylum claims who enter the UK to [take temporary employment](#). No longer would hosting refugees be a burden on the UK; instead, we would allow them to become productive members of society.



The question of how many refugees to accept is purely a political one, not an economic one. Government officials have claimed that it's a better use of public funds to help abroad. But that's completely wrong. If we let refugees in and allow them to work (as they would be keen to do), [the evidence shows](#) that the standard of living and unemployment rates for UK natives would remain about the same; the main effect is to radically increase the quality of life for the refugee. Compare the situation now to the Hungarian revolution of 1956: Austria, still broken from the second world war, took in 2% of its population in refugees, and emerged even stronger as a result. The UK could welcome hundreds of thousands of refugees to work here without damaging our economy.

Finally, the current crisis provides an opportunity to take a step towards much larger political change. We condemn people all over the world to a life of poverty or persecution because we prevent them from entering our country and being productive members of our community. The economic costs to us are trivial or nonexistent, but the gains to those who come to our country are vast: economists Michael Clemens, Claudio Montenegro and Lant Pritchett of the Center for Global Development [estimate that](#) the same person will earn between three and 10 times as much simply in virtue of moving from a poorer country to a richer one; the benefits of escaping a civil war are similarly vast. We should push to welcome Syrian refugees into our country, but we should not stop there. Refugees from Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan and elsewhere all deserve our help just as much as those on our doorstep.

Given this, what should we do? The limited evidence on effective political action suggests that non-violent street protests are effective at changing political will, and the bigger the protest the bigger the change. [In a study](#) of the Tea Party protests by the economist Andreas Madestam and colleagues, the authors "[found] evidence of sizable effects ... in terms of policymaking, both directly and through the selection of politicians in elections".

At a minimum, you should therefore sign the [government petition](#), which already has hundreds of thousands of signatures. But if you can, you should attend the [Solidarity with Refugees march](#) on 12 September, which has tens of thousands intending to participate, or one of the local marches all around the country, and use your network and social media to encourage as many others as possible to do the same.

Those fleeing Syria did not choose to be born into that country, just as we did not earn our birth into the UK. They have the right to a life free from persecution just as we do. Let's make it happen.

## Questions:

1. What is the article about?
2. What is the most beneficial action, according to the writer?
3. What does the writer suggest you do to help refugees?
4. How does the writer feel about the number of refugees the UK has taken in so far?
5. What is the writer's view about refugees?
6. How does the writer try to persuade the reader?
7. How does the writer compare people's fears about refugees with the facts?
8. What does the writer suggest is not helpful?

# We Need Gun Control to Stop More Than Criminals

Gun laws may not stop criminals, but they will save lives.

By [Susan Milligan](#) Jan. 16, 2014 | 12:35 p.m. EST+ [More](#)



Opponents of any kind of gun restrictions argue that they are meaningless, since criminals by definition don't follow the law, and therefore won't allow gun laws to hamstring their criminal behavior.

That's true. But gun violence isn't only committed by classic criminals, as recent gun-related tragedies show. There's the 12-year-old who apparently took a shotgun out of a musical instrument case and shot and injured two classmates at a middle school in New Mexico. His behavior would make him a criminal (and what is a 12-year-old doing with a gun?). But most likely, his classmates and teachers did not see him as your basic law-breaker. He

was, the Los Angeles Times reports, a [bright but distant boy](#). He was able to get a gun because his family is a gun family, enjoying hunting. Are they criminals? It doesn't sound like it. The boy simply had easy access to a gun, without which he would not have been able to do the damage he has done. We don't yet know the circumstances of the origin of the gun used, but could the tragedy have been averted had there been mandatory safety stopgaps – either on the weapon itself, or with a requirement that the guns be kept in a locked structure?

A man in Florida, meanwhile, shot and killed a fellow movie-goer after said viewer refused to stop texting. The annoyance of the shooter is more than understandable – and many of us might have no problem with grabbing a phone from a theater-goer, throwing it on the floor and stomping on it – but the fact that this man felt he could shoot and kill someone for behaving so boorishly is alarming. Is he a criminal? It didn't sound like it, based on evidence from before the shooting. In fact, he was a retired police officer with a spotless record. And early reports indicate he thought he was being threatened (turns out the “threat” may have just been thrown popcorn). The point is he had a gun, had it with him in a movie theater, and could not have killed someone if he had not had the weapon with him. If people were not allowed to carry concealed weapons into the theater, this particular tragedy may not have happened.

On Wednesday night, a gunman opened fire at an Indiana grocery store, killing two people with a semi-automatic weapon before police shot and killed the gunman. That offender may well have been a classic criminal before the episode. We may never know, as he can't tell us his back-story. If he was a troubled person (and his behavior suggests that he was), would a simple background check have kept him from getting such a gun?

Ban guns and only criminals will have guns, we are told. Put restrictions on gun ownership, or require people to undergo background checks first, and we will only make it harder for law-abiding citizens to get guns for protection, gun rights advocates say. They are right on both counts. But it would still prevent a great many murders.

# Our Kids Don't Need Gun Control Laws, They Need Fathers

Matt Walsh

I've noticed that the answers in life are often simple but rarely easy. For instance, if I want to lose 10 pounds, the simplest but hardest solution is to eat less and jog more. The most complicated but easiest solution is to consult with doctors and take pills and complain about my thyroid and eventually give up and start a "fat acceptance" group. A lot of people these days choose the latter. It's time consuming and it won't accomplish much, but at least it can be done from the couch.

We tend to see this mind-set manifest itself in dramatic fashion following any sort of national tragedy. We search desperately for answers, and the people tasked with providing them generally come up with a lot of complex laws and policies and political proposals, but nothing that even comes close to addressing the actual problem.

That's what happened yet again this past week, after Chris Harper-Mercer walked into a community college in Oregon and [slaughtered nine people](#). Immediately, the usual suspects manned their usual battle stations and started spouting their usual talking points about "gun control" and "mental health" and so on. Obama gave a [speech](#) mere hours after the attack and called for greater restrictions on the Second Amendment. Many others joined in his chorus.

Of course, the problem with this answer is that it isn't an answer. Even if we could completely remove the pesky issue of constitutional liberties from the equation, even if it were possible to cure violence by getting rid of one particular type of weapon, even if we ignore the fact that the [deadliest school attack in history](#) happened 90 years ago and was carried out not with guns but with explosives, and even if we look past the [studies showing](#) that gun control laws are counterproductive, gun control would still be basically impossible.

Obama likes to say there are enough guns in this country to arm every man, woman, and child — [not exactly accurate](#), but close enough — so what does he plan to do? Confiscate 300 million firearms? With what army? Literally, he would need the Army to do that. And since many law-abiding gun owners are current and former military, one wonders how that would play out.

Well, I already know. It *wouldn't*. It's not going to happen. It's an expensive, convoluted, extravagant, impractical, unconstitutional, disastrous, ridiculous, impossible solution. But it's easy. Not easy to do, easy to talk about. Easy in the abstract. Easy to use as a scapegoat. It's easier for us as a society to place the blame on the tool a murderer uses instead of focusing on *why* he chose to be a murderer in the first place. And if we do discuss why, it's easiest to simply and generically conclude that he's "crazy" or "nuts." A crazy nut with a gun, that's all. More pills! Fewer guns! That's the ticket! We find great comfort in this — pawning the solution off to politicians and drug companies — because it saves us from assuming any sort of responsibility ourselves.

## Questions:

1. What is the first article about?
2. What does Matt Walsh feel about gun control?
3. Compare how both articles feel about further gun control?
4. How does Matt Walsh try and persuade the audience?
5. What cases does Susan Milligan use to suggest that guns are not just used by criminals?
6. What does Susan Milligan suggest could be solved by stricter checks?
7. What metaphor does Matt Walsh use for the public's attitude on gun regulation?
8. Why does Matt Walsh suggest gun control would be impossible?

# Essex school gives pupils elocution lessons to lose their accents

**A primary school in Essex has become one of the first in the country to offer its pupils elocution lessons to help them lose their accents.**

PETER LAWSON/EASTNEWS  
27 Jan 2012

Cherry Tree Primary School, in Basildon, Essex has become one of the first in the country to offer its pupils

Pupils at Cherry Tree Primary School, in Basildon, are being taught to ditch their Essex accents during weekly lessons from a private tutor.

Teachers say they have seen a vast improvement in their pupils' spelling and writing since the lessons were introduced – with some parents even admitting they are now corrected on their pronunciation at home by their own children.



The Essex accent has been thrown under the spotlight around the country following the success of the reality TV show *The Only Way is Essex*.

However, Terri Chudleigh, English literacy coordinator, who first came up with the idea, said: "This is not about being ashamed of the Essex accent. I have an Essex accent and there's nothing wrong with it.

"It's about helping the children to speak properly so they can improve their reading and writing and obviously have a better education.

"I really wanted to get someone in because I noticed the children weren't saying words correctly and were therefore misspelling them.

"We had lots of youngsters writing 'sbort' instead of 'sport' and 'wellw' instead of 'well'.

"They now have half-hourly sessions where they get taken through exercises and learn to use the 'posh voices' in their heads. They really enjoy the sessions.

"The feedback we've had from parents has been very positive. We've had them tell us their children are going home and correcting them on their speech."

Lucy Stapleton, eight, has only been having elocution lessons since September but says she is already notices the difference.

She said: "I like the lessons because I used to say 'computa' instead of computer."

Elocution lessons have enjoyed a resurgence in popularity over the past year following the success of Oscar-winning film *The King's Speech*, in which King George VI overcomes his battle with a lifelong stammer thanks to help from a therapist.

During weekly sessions at the school, children run through fun speech exercises including "ho hum", "stifled smile" and "tongue boot camp" before being encouraged to use "posh voices".

Francesca Gordon-Smith, who runs the sessions through her business Positive Voice, says she has been pleasantly surprised with how far the children have come in such a short space of time.

"I've definitely noticed the difference since I started coming here and I really enjoy being with the pupils.

"I'd never heard of a primary school having elocution lessons before I started here. Some exclusive grammar schools have lessons but not many, so it's great to see a primary school like Cherry Tree wanting to do this."

# There's nowt wrong with slang

Emma Thompson of all people ought to appreciate that Shakespeare's slang became part of our everyday language  
Friday 8 October 2010 12.00 BST

That epitome of Hampstead luvviness, Emma Thompson, has apparently started a campaign [against the use of "sloppy slang"](#) and "street talk". It follows a visit to her old school, Camden High for Girls. What's to be expected from a Cambridge graduate? It is still an institution of received pronunciation. She is not alone in this call to arms against slang. Fellow north Londoner Tom Conti agrees, as does Kathy Lette, that writer of such timeless classics as *Puberty Blues*, which is about "top chicks" and "surfie spunks", and *Alter Ego*, about a "knight in shining Armani". Lette attempts to show off her punning by calling slang a "vowel cancer" and urging teens to study "tongue fu".

This kind of talk has got me well vexed. Listen up, yeah, there's nowt wrong with slang, so you need to stop mitherin', d'ya get me? Those who are from the north will recognise nowt as nothing and mitherin' as bothering. And "d'ya get me?" is, well, comprende? Slang has been around for a long time. Far from showing the user as "stupid", as Thompson contends, it demonstrates inventiveness and quickness of thought; a language plasticity, if you like; a language on the go, [evolving](#) not just from one generation to the next, but one year to the next. Its use shows that students are able to learn and speak a wide range of vernacular. The British Library certainly seem to think so, with its upcoming exhibition on [evolving English](#).

Types of slang can be seen as distinct dialects in their own right. Yet there are those who would complain that it excludes many more than it will let in. The same argument has been made regarding novels such as Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* – the use of the Leithian dialect a clear statement that, to get "them", requires work; the same work it would take for them to learn RP. British literature is served well by slang – it can energise prose – and there is also Will Self's "Mokni", from *The Book of Dave*.

I am not saying that slang is a substitute for "standard" English, but should be recognised and capitalised upon for what it is – a love of communication and an inventiveness of speech that continues to make English one of the most interesting languages.

## Questions:

1. What do both articles have in common?
2. How does the second article view the role of slang.
3. How does the second article persuade readers of the benefits of slang?
4. How does Article 1 present standard English as being positive?
5. What does Article 2 suggest are advantages of using slang?
6. What impact has Standard English had on the pupils?
7. How is Slang sometimes portrayed as negative?

# BLOOD DIAMONDS

IT'S BEEN 15 YEARS SINCE THE GLOBAL EFFORT TO BAN CONFLICT DIAMONDS BEGAN. BUT THE INDUSTRY IS STILL TAINTED BY CONFLICT AND MISERY

STORY BY [ARYN BAKER/TSHIKAPA](#)  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY [LYNSEY ADDARIO](#) FOR TIME

Max Rodriguez knows exactly how he is going to propose marriage to his long-term boyfriend, Michael Loper. He has booked a romantic bed-and--breakfast. He has found, using Google Earth, a secluded garden where he plans to take Loper for a sunset walk. The only thing that troubles him is the issue of the ring. Rodriguez has heard about how diamonds fuel distant conflicts, about the miserable conditions of the miners who wrest the stones from the earth, and he worries. The 34-year-old slips on a gold signet-style ring in the 12th-floor showroom of Vale Jewelry in New York City's diamond district. "I don't want a symbol of our union to also be associated with chaos and controversy and pain," says Rodriguez.

To Mbuyi Mwanza, a 15-year-old who spends his days shoveling and sifting gravel in small artisanal mines in southwest Democratic Republic of Congo, diamonds symbolize something much more immediate: the opportunity to eat. Mining work is grueling, and he is plagued by backaches, but that is nothing compared with the pain of seeing his family go hungry. His father is blind; his mother abandoned them several years ago. It's been three months since Mwanza last found a diamond, and his debts—for food, for medicine for his father—are piling up. A large stone, maybe a carat, could earn him \$100, he says, enough to let him dream about going back to school, after dropping out at 12 to go to the mines—the only work available in his small village. He knows of at least a dozen other boys from his community who have been forced to work in the mines to survive.

Mwanza's mine, a ruddy gash on the banks of a small stream whose waters will eventually reach the Congo River, is at the center of one of the world's most important sources of gem-quality diamonds. Yet the provincial capital, Tshikapa, betrays nothing of the wealth that lies beneath the ground. None of the roads are paved, not even the airport runway. Hundreds of miners die every year in tunnel collapses that are seldom reported because they happen so often. Teachers at government schools demand payment from students to supplement their meager salaries. Many parents choose to send their teenagers to the mines instead. "We do this work so we can find something that will let us eat," says Mwanza. "When I find a stone, I eat. There is no money left for school."

Given the ugly realities of the diamond business, it would be tempting to forgo buying a diamond altogether, or to choose, as Rodriguez eventually did, to purchase a synthetic alternative. But Congolese mining officials say diamonds are a vital source of income—if not the only source—for an estimated 1 million small-scale, or artisanal, miners in Congo who dig by hand for the crystals that will one day adorn the engagement ring of a bride- or groom-to-be. "If people stop buying our diamonds, we won't be able to eat," says Mwan-

za. "We still won't be able to go to school. How does that help us?"

In an age of supply-chain transparency, when a \$4 latte can come with an explanation of where the coffee was grown and how, even luxury goods like diamonds are under pressure to prove that they can be sustainable. The Kimberley Process has gone some of the way, yet a truly fair-trade system would not only ban diamonds mined in conflict areas but also allow conscientious consumers to buy diamonds that could improve the working and living conditions of artisanal miners like Mwanza. But the hard truth is that years after the term blood diamond breached the public consciousness, there is almost no way to know for sure that you're buying a diamond without blood on it.

Tiffany & Co., Signet and De Beers' Forevermark brand have instituted strict sourcing policies for their diamonds that address many of these concerns. In New York next March, jewelry--industry executives from around the world will meet for an unprecedented 2½-day conference on responsible sourcing in an attempt to hammer out an industry-wide process as transparent as the one that brings fair-trade coffee to Starbucks. "Why shouldn't we be able to trace a much more valuable and more emotionally laden product?" asks Beth Gerstein, who in 2005 co-founded Brilliant Earth, one of the first jewelry companies to make responsible sourcing a selling point.

Ava Bai, one of the twin-sibling designers behind New York's Vale Jewelry, believes the desire of millennials to shop according to their ethics has also helped pushed the industry to embrace sustainability. Fine-jewelry- sales in the U.S.—the world's biggest retail diamond market—have stagnated, growing only 1.9% from 2004 to 2013, even as other luxury items, like fine wines and electronics, have gone up by more than 10%. "Millennial consumers are looking for more than the 4Cs [the classic Cut, Carat, Clarity and Color]," says Linnette Gould, head of media relations for De Beers, which launched its Forevermark diamond brand in the U.S. in 2011 with a commitment to responsible sourcing.

"They want a guarantee that it is ethical. They want to know about environmental impact. They want to know about labor practices. They want to know that the communities have benefited from the diamonds they are mining." For its part, Vale deals directly with one family that does the buying, cutting and polishing. Their buyer sources diamonds from South African and Indian mines—generally considered more sustainable—and the Bai twins plan to visit the South African mine next year.

Two days later a young diamond merchant ducks into Funji Kindamba's storefront office. He spills a fistful of greasy yellow and gray stones onto Kindamba's desk. With the help of large tweezers, Kindamba pushes the diamonds into piles with a practiced flick of his wrist, separating out the large ones from the tiny diamonds used in pavé work, where small stones are set very closely together. Eventually they come to an agreement on a price: \$200. Kindamba notes down the seller's name, the price he paid and the total carat weight for the whole packet—4.5—in a small notebook. Kindamba has no idea where the diamonds come from. "There are thousands of mines," he says with a laugh. "It's impossible to keep track." Diamond-industry experts like to say a packet of diamonds will change hands on average eight to 10 times between the country of export and its final destination. The reality is that diamonds from the mines outside Tshikapa are likely to change hands eight to 10 times before they even leave the province for the capital, Kinshasa, the only place where Congolese diamonds can be certified for export. Kindamba's diamonds will be sold on at least twice before they reach a licensed buyer where a representative from the Ministry of Mines can assess the value and furnish the official form required to obtain the Kimberley certificate. On the line noting the location of the mine, it will simply say Tshikapa.

Given the near impossibility of tracing diamonds to their source in countries like Congo, where artisanal mining predominates, jewelers who want a more transparent supply chain usually buy from mining companies like De Beers or Rio Tinto, which control all aspects of the process from exploration to cutting and selling. Others source only from countries with good human-rights records. Brilliant Earth, for example, buys most of its diamonds from Canada. "The unfortunate reality is that there are so many problems that have to be solved before we can offer fair-trade diamonds from the Congo," says Gerstein.

It's a delicate balancing act. On the one hand, companies need to understand enough about their supply chains to assure customers that child-labor issues, environmental degradation or human-rights abuses do not taint their jewelry. But while the easiest way to do that is by simply boycotting certain countries, abstaining won't make those problems disappear. In a desperately poor country like Congo—where over half the population lives on less than \$1.25 a day—things could actually get worse. "Artisanal miners in Africa are actually becoming victims of our desire to do right by diamond miners," says Bai.

According to Congo's Ministry of Mines, nearly 10% of the population relies on income from diamonds, and the country produces about a fifth of the world's industrial diamonds. Diamonds may bring problems, but rejecting them outright would bring even more, says Albert Kiungu Muepu, the provincial head of a Congolese NGO that, with the help of the Ottawa-based Diamond Development Initiative (DDI), is organizing miners into collectives—the first step toward establishing fair-trade diamonds. A boycott "will not change diamonds of misfortune into diamonds of joy overnight," he says. "If those who want to do good stop buying our diamonds, rest assured, Congo still loses. The way to better conditions in Congo is to help us better our system so that the resources generated by Congo can profit Congo." So how can a concerned consumer buy a diamond in a way that actually helps people like Mwanza and Ngalamume? Asking questions can go a long way. Responsible jewelers should know every step in the path from mine to market. Kimberley Process certification alone isn't enough—as of now the system is too limited. Diamonds that come from Zimbabwe and Angola are particularly problematic. Watchdog groups have documented human-rights abuses in and around mines in those countries, though exports from both nations are allowed under the Kimberley Process—another loophole in the system.

While buying diamonds from a conflict-free country like Canada can buy you a clean conscience, a better bet may be African countries like Botswana and Namibia. Governments in both countries have a solid record of working with both the industrial mining industry and artisanal miners to enforce strong labor and environmental standards. Sierra Leone—the setting for much of the film *Blood Diamond*—has improved as well, though the country's recent Ebola outbreak set back some of that progress.

Consumers who care can trace the fish on their plate back to the patch of sea it was taken from. They can choose fair-trade apparel that benefits the cotton farmers and seamstresses who produced their clothing. But the lineage of one of the most valuable products that many consumers will ever buy in their lifetime remains shrouded in uncertainty, and too often the people who do the arduous work of digging those precious stones from the earth are the ones who benefit the least. The only way that the blood will finally be washed away from conflict diamonds is if there is a true fair-trade-certification process that allows conscientious consumers to buy Congo's artisanal diamonds with peace of mind—just as they might a cup of coffee

## Questions:

1. What is the article focussed on?
2. What differences does the writer highlight between the Congo and places like New York?
3. What are conditions like in the capital near the mine?
4. How does the writer try and persuade the audience that there should be a way of tracking diamonds?
5. What does the writer feel about the way diamonds are currently being sold around the world?

# £10 each can save the NHS

*The NHS no longer meets the country's needs. Rather than managing decline, politicians and the public must face uncomfortable truths*

**Norman Warner and Jack O'Sullivan**

Monday 31 March 2014 06.00 BST

A care and cash crisis is sending the NHS bust. In its present form, a shortfall of £30bn a year, or more, is expected by 2020. Paying off the nation's deficit means five more years of further deep public expenditure cuts, whoever is in government. So, over-protecting an outdated, cosseted and unaffordable healthcare system inevitably means starving other vital public services, unless we choke off economic growth and worsen the cost of living with big tax increases. That might be worth contemplating if the [NHS](#) was offering brilliant care. But it isn't.

Just look at the thousands of frail elderly people who get the care they need only by queuing in A&E and spending weeks in hospital – the most expensive and often the worst way to look after them. And let's not forget that the NHS is sleepwalking through an obesity epidemic.

These are truths hidden from public view. Many politicians and clinicians are scared to tell people that our much-loved 65-year-old NHS no longer meets the country's needs. Frankly, it is often poor value for money, and the greatest public spending challenge after the general election.

We can fix the problems but it will take a full parliament of continuous political, professional and managerial effort. This requires political leadership of change, not micro-management of inevitable decline, backing [Simon Stevens as he takes over this week as NHS England's new chief executive](#).

First, we have to shift services closer to home. Elderly people, those with chronic conditions, mental health problems and health-damaging lifestyles must cease to be NHS second-class citizens until they finally land up as sick refugees in our expensive acute hospital system. That will mean merged health and social care, funded by health and wellbeing boards, co-ordinated from refashioned community hospitals, converted into 24/7 hubs for comprehensive community services supported by consolidated GP practices.

Our specialist hospital services should be concentrated in fewer, safer, better-equipped and more expert centres with 24/7 consultant cover and improved transport links. That will save lives and money: similar consolidation of stroke care in London is saving 400 lives a year and £800 per patient because they recover quicker. MPs taking to the streets to preserve clinically unsustainable hospital services only damage their constituents.



A new integrated "National [Health](#) and Care Service" would pioneer a "co-producing" health partnership between state and citizen, with annual personal health MOTs agreeing responsibilities over the year for both services and the individual. At the heart of this relationship would be an NHS membership scheme, charging £10 a month (with some exemptions) collected through council tax for local preventative services to help people stay healthy.

This is one of several new funding streams urgently needed to renew impoverished parts of our care system but preserving a mainly tax-funded NHS that is largely free at the point of use. We have to escape the constraints of general taxation if we want a decent system.

But the NHS must also do more for less by aggressively tackling its own inefficiency, particularly its use of fixed assets. A quarter of its cautiously valued £30bn estate is underused and could be sold or exploited commercially. The NHS could realise recurrent savings of £10bn-£18bn if it operated efficiently, according to the regulator, [Monitor](#) – these savings could deliver a £15bn service transition fund for improved community-based services. Health and care should be on a flat, inflation-proofed budget until 2020 with any additional increases coming from new revenue sources. We propose hypothecated, tougher taxes on tobacco, alcohol, sugary foods and drinks and gambling, ring-fenced only for health and care spending.

Just 3.5% of the annual 500,000 deaths lead to payment of inheritance tax. We must expect the elderly, after their deaths, to contribute more. NHS free entitlements, such as continuing care, could be reduced or means-tested and hotel costs in hospital charged, as in France and Germany.

We must start a big conversation about saving a pooled-risk NHS, funded largely from taxation that improves people's prospects of living longer and healthier lives. We can have a system that is affordable, that transforms rather than shuts hospitals and avoids another giant reorganisation. We need our political and professional leaders to help us face uncomfortable truths rather than presiding silently over the current miserable decline.

## Questions:

1. What is the article focussed on?
2. What suggestions are given to solve the current crisis?
3. How does the writer feel about the dangers to the NHS?
4. How does the writer try and persuade the audience to act?
5. What comparison does the writer create between the NHS as he sees it and the NHS the public see or wish to have?

*"I find television very educating. Every time somebody turns on the set, I go into the other room and read a book."*

— *Groucho Marx*

first... so... because... next... exciting... afraid... lonely... interesting... beautiful... awful... enormous... fierce... adventure...  
accident... magic... thunderous... fearful... marvellous... attractive... generously... echo... nervously... worriedly... patiently...  
feelings... courage... experience... peak... patience... wasteland... container... furnishings... robe... gigantic... weird... freezing...  
quietly... bravely... happiness... joy... sadness... fear... transport... shelter... baggage... companion... vehicle... sensitive/ly... timid/  
ly... aggressively... imaginatively... unfortunate... murderous... echoing... doubtful... emotion... anxiety... longing... progress  
(noun)... system... communication... ingredient... vibration... prefer... nourish... demonstrate... enjoy... leap... outstanding/ly...  
tender/ly... biological/ly... formidable... outspoken... stern... comical... pathetic... yearning... dwell... dine... progress (verb)...  
create... adore... foreboding... speculation... silhouette... terrain... apparel... vision... atmosphere...

## VOCABULARY

“ ” ; , ... ( ) ? . !

## PUNCTUATION

And, but, so, then, because, when, if, after, while, as well as, although, however, also, besides, even though, nevertheless, in addition, to the contrary, despite, so as to, firstly, consequently, furthermore, moreover, nonetheless

*Use complex sentence structures appropriately. Vary sentence length and word order to keep your reader interested.*

## CONNECTIVES

The... My... I... First... Then... Next... So... Although... Afterwards... Before... Eventually... Sometimes... Often... Never... Always... Besides... Even though... Before the/they ... Having... Last... But... Another thing... The last time... Soon... At last... If... Another time... Because... After... Meanwhile... Before very long... However... In addition... Despite... An important thing... We always... If/then... I felt as... Although I had... I discovered...  
Having decided... I actually... Despite... Due to... As time went...

## OPENINGS

# WRITING IN YOUR LESSONS