

The Story of Chocolate — From Ancient Drink to Global Industry

Reading Worksheet — Level F | tahricteaches.com

Chocolate is one of the world's most beloved treats, but its story stretches back more than 3,000 years. The **ancient** peoples of Central America, including the Maya and the Aztecs, were the first to **produce** a drink from cacao. To them, cacao was so **valuable** that the beans were used as money. The Aztecs even believed that chocolate was a gift from the gods, and only rulers and warriors were allowed to drink it.

Cacao trees grow only in warm, **tropical** regions near the equator. Today the largest cacao-growing **region** in the world is West Africa, where countries such as Ghana and the Ivory Coast **produce** most of the world's supply. The trees need heavy rain, rich soil, and steady heat, so they cannot survive in cool climates. Each tree grows large pods, and inside every pod are 30 to 50 seeds known as cacao beans.

Turning these beans into chocolate is a long and careful **process**. First, farmers **harvest** the ripe pods by hand and remove the beans. The beans are left to ferment for several days, which develops their rich **flavor**. After fermenting, they are dried, cleaned, and roasted. Finally, machines grind the roasted beans into a thick paste that becomes the chocolate we know. Sugar, milk, and other ingredients are added to create different products.

Chocolate is now a giant global **industry** worth over 100 billion dollars every year. Farmers in tropical countries **harvest** the beans and **export** them to factories in Europe, North America, and Asia. Sadly, many of these farmers earn very little money, even though the crop they grow is so **valuable**. In recent years, "fair trade" programs have tried to make sure that the people who grow cacao receive a fairer price for their hard work.

Part of what makes chocolate so special is its complex **flavor**. Just like wine or coffee, the taste of chocolate changes depending on where the beans were grown and how they were processed. Beans from different **regions produce** chocolate with fruity, nutty, or earthy notes. From an **ancient** sacred drink to a modern worldwide **industry**, chocolate has traveled an incredible journey — and it remains one of humanity's most delicious inventions.

A. Vocabulary

1. ancient ____	a. a large area of land with particular features
2. harvest ____	b. to send goods to another country to be sold

3. process ____	c. a series of steps taken to make or do something
4. produce ____	d. worth a lot of money; very useful or important
5. tropical ____	e. the particular taste of a food or drink
6. flavor ____	f. belonging to the very distant past; very old
7. industry ____	g. to gather a crop when it is ripe
8. valuable ____	h. to make or grow something, especially in large amounts
9. region ____	i. relating to the hot, wet areas near the equator
10. export ____	j. the making of goods, especially in factories, as a large business

B. True or False

1. The Maya and Aztecs were among the first to make a drink from cacao. ____
2. The Aztecs used cacao beans as a form of money. ____
3. Cacao trees can grow easily in cool, dry climates. ____
4. West Africa is now the largest cacao-growing region in the world. ____
5. Cacao beans are roasted before they are fermented. ____
6. Fermenting the beans for several days develops their rich flavor. ____
7. The chocolate industry is worth over 100 billion dollars a year. ____
8. Most cacao farmers earn a large amount of money from the crop. ____
9. The flavor of chocolate changes depending on where the beans were grown. ____





C. Fill in the Blanks

Word Bank: ancient, tropical, harvest, industry, export

1. The _____ Maya and Aztecs were the first to make a chocolate drink.
2. Cacao trees grow only in warm, _____ regions near the equator.
3. Farmers _____ the ripe pods by hand and remove the beans.
4. Chocolate is now a global _____ worth over 100 billion dollars a year.
5. Farmers in tropical countries _____ their beans to factories abroad.

D. Comprehension Questions

1. How did the ancient Maya and Aztecs use and value cacao?
2. Why can cacao trees only grow in certain regions of the world?
3. Describe the main steps in the process of turning cacao beans into chocolate.
4. Why do many cacao farmers earn little money, and what has been done to help them?
5. What gives different chocolates their unique flavors?

E. Discussion Questions

1. Should companies be required to pay cacao farmers a fair price, even if it makes chocolate more expensive? Why or why not?
2. The Aztecs treated chocolate as a sacred, luxury item, while today it is cheap and everywhere. Is something lost when a rare treat becomes common? Explain.
3. If you ran a chocolate company, what is one thing you would do differently to help the environment or the farmers?





Answer Key

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A. Vocabulary: 1-f, 2-g, 3-c, 4-h, 5-i, 6-e, 7-j, 8-d, 9-a, 10-b

B. True/False: 1-T, 2-T, 3-F, 4-T, 5-F, 6-T, 7-T, 8-F, 9-T

C. Fill Blanks: 1-ancient, 2-tropical, 3-harvest, 4-industry, 5-export

D. Comprehension:

1. The ancient Maya and Aztecs were the first to produce a drink from cacao. They valued it so highly that the beans were used as money, and the Aztecs believed chocolate was a gift from the gods, reserved for rulers and warriors.
2. Cacao trees need heavy rain, rich soil, and steady heat, so they can only grow in warm, tropical regions near the equator and cannot survive in cool climates.
3. Farmers harvest the ripe pods and remove the beans, which are fermented for several days to develop flavor, then dried, cleaned, and roasted. Machines grind the roasted beans into a thick paste, and sugar, milk, and other ingredients are added to make different products.
4. Many farmers earn very little even though cacao is so valuable; 'fair trade' programs have tried to ensure that the people who grow cacao receive a fairer price for their hard work.
5. The flavor depends on where the beans were grown and how they were processed, so beans from different regions produce chocolate with fruity, nutty, or earthy notes.

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