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# CULTURAL POLLUTION

A TALKING POINTS LESSON FOR  
ENGLISH READING & SPEAKING

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## Introduction

Are there many fast-food outlets in your town or city?

What do people think of them?

Is there a limit on how many fast-food outlets are allowed?

Why/why not?

## What Has Happened To Our Town?

### *A disgruntled man describes his town:*

It's got to the point where I just don't recognise the place anymore.

Don't get me wrong, I'm all for free enterprise. I'm a local businessman myself.

### *But this is ridiculous.*

The whole town is filled with all of these fast-food chains and coffee shops.

And if it's not that, we've got these ice cream shops too.

### **And all American.**

Go down the old High Street and there's a McDonald's at the bottom of the town, then at the top of the road, you've got another McDonald's. Then we've got a KFC halfway down the street. Two Starbucks and a Dairy Queen.

Pizza Hut, Domino's Pizza and another pizza place I can't remember the name of.

Why do we need all these things? And why does it all have to be fast food and coffee?

### *Years ago, we had local things.*

A tea shop — replaced by one of the Starbucks. And a fish and chip shop — now it's a KFC.

I feel like I'm drowning in the worst of American culture...

I would like to see some traditional British things.

***Is that too much to ask for?***

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What this man is describing here is called **Cultural Pollution**.

This is when we see too many products or services from another country — ***and that country is usually America***.

Look at all the fast food names and coffee shop chains the man talked about above.

**They are all American.**

For many years now, American food chains and convenience stores have been spreading around the world at a rapid rate.

We don't complain when we see restaurants from other countries appear in our neighbourhood. It is great to see an Indian or Chinese restaurant on our local High Street.

Or a Polish deli. Maybe a Turkish supermarket.

But when the entire street is filled with American big brands,

we might feel that our own culture is being crushed out of existence.

At first, we might find the idea novel. To see a McDonald's appear in the town centre and see something of American life.

But these restaurants are quickly followed by others. And before we know it we are surrounded by the lowest form of American consumer culture.

It's bad enough that these American brands appear in English towns but when they start to pop up in other countries, it makes you think they are taking over the world.

So we might see a McDonald's on an island in Thailand, a KFC just outside a temple in China, and a Starbucks on a narrow street in Vietnam.

***At what point do we say no?***

## Reading Comprehension Questions

Does the man in the story like businesses appearing in his town?

Does he like to drink coffee?

Is he a fan of fast food?

Does he dislike American chains?

Which street in his town does he talk about?

Name the American chains that he can see there.

What local kind of shops could the man see in his town many years before?

What name is applied to this phenomenon?

Where do the brands and chains come from?

Are American brands in every country in the world?

Does the article encourage other countries to set up business in the town?

What countries?

Name three other countries where we might see Cultural Pollution.

## Essential Vocabulary

disgruntled	recognise	free enterprise
ridiculous	fast-food chains	tea shop
replaced	fish and chip shop	drowning
culture	traditional	Cultural Pollution
products	services	convenience store
to spread around	rapid rate	Indian
Chinese	Polish	Turkish
deli	entire	crushed
existence	novel	surrounded
consumer	brands	to pop up
to take over	temple	narrow

### Exercise

Write down all the words and phrases in your vocabulary notebook. Look in your dictionary and find the meaning of each word. Write the definition next to each word.

Then make up your own sentences using each word or phrase.

For example:

**Notebook**—*a small book with pages of blank paper that students use to make notes when studying.*



***“I left my notebook at home so I was unable to make any notes in my English class.”***

## Discussion Questions

What kind of American brands and chains can you see in your town or city? Describe the brands and what they are.

Which of these American outlets do you enjoy? Why?

Think about the food. But also think of the decor of the interior and the staff that work there. What do you like about this place?

Do you think there are too many of these American chains?

Why? Why not?

What purpose do these restaurants and outlets serve? Think in terms of the local economy, jobs, and how they affect local business owners, and the community.

Can you think of any examples where we should definitely not see any of these restaurants or outlets? For example, next to The Great Wall of China or in the middle of Red Square. Why do you think this? Why are they acceptable in other places?

Do you think this is just a natural part of the evolution of culture? That a dominant culture will be seen in most cities?

Why/why not?

What is so special about the local restaurants in your town or city? Try to sell the idea of them to the class. Think of all the

benefits of local cuisine and why your town or city needs local cuisine restaurants.

Some would argue — quite rightly, in many cases — that many American fast-food outlets are serving unhealthy food and making people fat.

How can we change people's perceptions of this kind of food?

What do we need to teach people about this daily diet?

Do you think these outlets should be banned outright?

Why/why not?

If you could start a food chain from your own country's culture and take it to America, what could it be? Do you think the American people would like this kind of cuisine? Why/why not?

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