

1.4 The Story of Tea

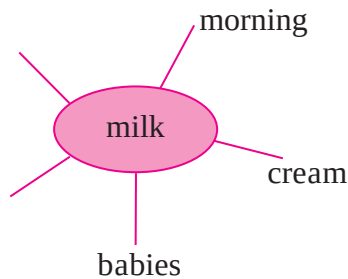
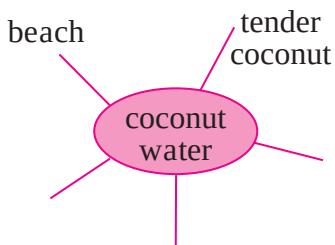
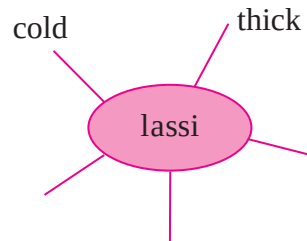
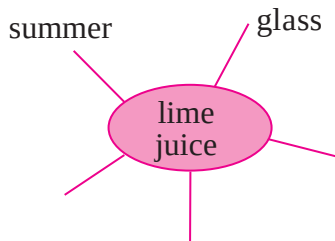
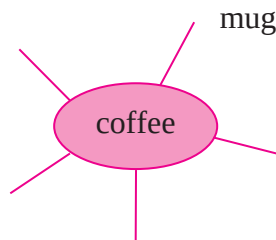
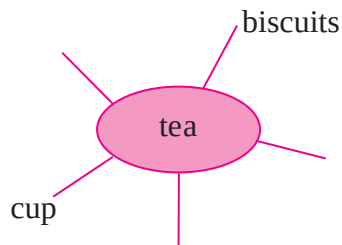
Warming up!

Chit-Chat

- Can you make tea?
- How do you make tea?
- What brand do you like?
- At home, who makes tea/coffee for everybody?
- Have you seen a tea-plantation?
What was it like?



- **Write** the names of as many beverages as you can **within two minutes**. What do the following beverages remind you of? **Draw word webs** to show your associations.



♦ Form pairs and write the process of making tea in a step-by-step manner.

♦ When you draw word webs, think of describing words or adjectives describing colour, quality, feel, aroma, taste, etc. Then think of the actions associated with the words: sip, slurp, gulp, swallow, heat, cool, boil, filter, pour, etc. You can easily think of other objects associated with it.
- spoon, straw, etc., ingredients

♦ Compare your webs with those of your friends and add more words to your vocabulary.

The Story of Tea

- aromatic : having a pleasant smell; fragrant
- brew : drink made by boiling or keeping something in hot water for sometime
- astringent : sharp



- ♦ How is tea, the beverage, made?
- ♦ How is tea, that is packed and sold to us, made?
- ♦ Where are tea estates located?
- ♦ Why are tea plants pruned?

Find out :

- ♦ What are botanical names? How are they decided?

Let us begin with a question : can you name the most widely consumed beverage in the world, after water?

Perhaps many of you have guessed the answer : the most popular beverage in the world is tea – the fresh, aromatic brew with which people like to begin their day. It has a refreshing, astringent flavour. It is actually made by brewing, that is by infusing in boiling water, the leaves and shoots of a plant whose botanical name is the *Camellia sinensis*. The leaves are at first dried, cured and processed before they are packed and sold to us.

Camellia sinensis is an evergreen plant that grows in tropical and sub-tropical climates. Tea plants require at least 100-125 cm of rainfall a year and prefer acidic soils. Many of the world's best tea estates are located on hill slopes at elevations of up to 1500 metres : it is said that the tea plants grow slowly and acquire a richer flavour at this height.

When the plants mature, only the top 1-2 inches of the plant are picked. These buds and leaves are called flushes. A new flush appears on the plant every seven to ten days during the peak growing season. Left to grow on its own, the tea plant may actually grow into a small tree. But in all tea gardens, the plants are pruned and kept at a height of about three feet (waist high) to enable easy plucking of the leaves.

The teas we buy are usually classified according to their leaf size. Accordingly we have (1) Assam type of tea, characterised by the largest leaves; (2) China type, characterised by the smallest leaves; and (3) Cambod, characterised by leaves of intermediate size.

We have three very distinct and different tea growing regions in India. Each of these regions is famous for the special type of tea it produces, which are unique in taste, aroma, strength and flavour. The three regions are : Darjeeling in North-Eastern India,

Assam in far North-East India and Nilgiris in South India.

Most people agree that tea is a refreshing drink. It contains no carbohydrates, fat, or proteins. What gives tea its special and distinctive flavour is theanine as well as caffeine, which give the drink its stimulating quality.

How and when did people first begin to drink tea? An amusing story has come down to us from Chinese legends. It is said that Emperor Shennong, the father of Chinese agriculture and medicine, was on his travels, when a servant was boiling some water for the emperor to drink. Just then, a few leaves from a nearby tree blew into the boiling water. The water immediately changed colour. On drinking the water, the emperor was amazed by the rich flavour and the refreshing quality of the resulting infusion. Excited by the unknown plant and its amazing flavour, he carried out further investigations, and discovered that tea had many healing and restorative properties and could also be used as an antidote to certain poisons.

Yet another legend tells us that it was a Buddhist monk named Bodhidharma who was the first to use tea as a drink. He was keen to find a herb or a medicinal plant which would help him stay awake and alert for long periods of time in prayer and meditation. After considerable search and trial, he found that chewing leaves from the tea shrub acted as a stimulant, helping him stay awake. It was he who introduced tea among his disciples in China. It is said that Japanese priests studying under Buddhist teachers in China carried tea seeds and leaves back home with them. Turkish traders also began to bargain for tea on the border of Mongolia. In fact, the story goes that the Chinese Emperor Hui Tsung was so taken up with tea that he set up a research into the best tea-whisking methods and also hosted **tea-making** and tea-tasting tournaments in the court. So 'tea minded' was he, that he failed to notice that Mongolia had actually taken over his empire!



♦ What does tea contain? What does it not contain?

♦ Who was Emperor Shennong?

♦ Why did he carry out further investigations about tea?

♦ How did tea reach other parts of the world?

Discuss :



♦ What is the difference between legends or stories and history?

- ♦ Can you guess the origin of the Marathi word 'chaha'?

- ♦ The paragraph about how tea came to India brings out the difference between history based on oral sources and 'recorded history'. Discuss how the author brings it out.

- ♦ What is the difference between 'claim' and 'fact'?

- ♦ Do you have any ceremonies associated with food items?

Thus the habit of drinking tea spread to Japan, Europe and England, where it became a fashionable and popular drink among the people.

How did this magical beverage get its name? The Chinese character t'u was first used in early inscriptions to describe tea. But later, a new character, ch'a, was developed to refer specifically to tea. The word ch'a is now sometimes used in English to refer to China tea. And, as we all know, it is very close to the Hindi word *chai*, which is used all over India to refer to tea.

How did tea first come to India? Historians think that tea had been known in India as a medicinal plant since ancient times, but tea was not drunk for pleasure until the British began to establish plantations in the 19th century. In the 1770s, the British East India Company made several unsuccessful attempts to grow tea in Bhutan and Assam, with seeds from China. Although these attempts failed, the botanist Robert Bruce in 1823 discovered tea plants growing wild in the Upper Brahmaputra valley. In May 1838, the first Indian tea from Assam was sent to England for public sale. Since then India has gone on to become one of the leading producers of tea in the world.

Tea lovers claim that tea may be able to reduce the risk of cancer, control blood pressure, fight viruses in our body and actually help us live longer!

Our body produces chemicals called free radicals. They can damage our body and our health. Tea contains antioxidants called flavonoids. Scientists believe these help to protect our system against free radicals.

For many people tea is a popular drink to have with friends. In many countries around the world, tea drinking is an important social occasion.

Japan, China, Russia and Korea have special tea ceremonies and traditions. These ceremonies give people the time to relax and enjoy the taste and the smell of the tea.

Most people in Japan belong to a 'tea club' where they go every week to take part in the tea ceremony.

Ordinary people also feel that tea ceremonies are spiritual occasions that are closely associated with their religion. ‘Tea,’ they say, ‘is a healthy, enjoyable and stimulating drink, full of good qualities. It reduces loneliness and calms your heart; it is a comfort in everyday life’.

Many Koreans today still have tea ceremonies for important occasions including special birthdays and anniversaries.



In most areas of China the tea is made in small clay teapots. At tea ceremonies, cups are only half-filled. The Chinese believe that the rest of the cup must be filled with friendship and affection.

In Russia, tea is made and served in samovars – a special Russian tea kettle, made of metal.

Vietnam produces special varieties of tea such as lotus tea and jasmine tea.

In Japan, tea is made using powdered green tea called ‘matcha’. The tea is mixed with boiled water using a bamboo whisk and served in small bowls.

And how about India ? A cup of tea is offered to any guest or visitor as a token of hospitality even in the humblest of homes. Most Indians like their tea hot with a good deal of milk and sugar in it. In the rainy season, it is brewed with ginger to give it additional medicinal properties. Others add spices, like cardamom, cloves or mace, to add to its taste and flavour. Tea is a must after a plate of spicy snacks, especially in the morning and evenings.

Some connoisseurs relish delicately flavoured jasmine tea, green tea, lemon tea and even iced tea! How about you?



♦ What are the good qualities of tea?

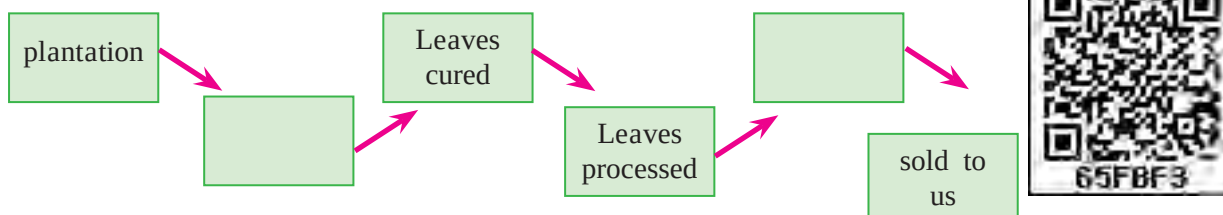
♦ Why are the cups only half-filled in Chinese tea ceremonies?

Things to do:

Make a bilingual glossary of the various spices used in the kitchen.



- List all the names of Geographical places mentioned in the passage.
- Make smaller words using the letters** in the given words. (At least 5 words each)
 - actually • refreshing • immediately • investigations
 - meditation • enjoyable • loneliness • friendship
- From the passage, **copy correctly** any three sentences that begin with 'How'.
- Find the meanings** of the following **from a good dictionary** :
 - infusion • restorative • inscriptions • radicals • connoisseurs
- List the words related to** (a) agriculture (b) chemistry from this passage.
- Complete the following sentences with the help of the passage :
 - Camellia sinensis* is an evergreen plant that grows in
 - The teas we buy are usually classified according to
 - In many countries around the world, tea drinking is an
 - Our body produces chemicals called
- Prepare a flow chart** to show the growth and journey of tea from the plantation to our homes. Use information from the lesson.



Language Study

- From the passage, find all the words or pairs of words that begin with 'tea'.
Examples: teapot, tea plants.
When two words come together to form a new word, the new word is called a **compound** word. What words do you see in the following compounds – evergreen, blood pressure, everyday?
Note that some compound words are written as one word (teapot), some with a hyphen between them (tea-making) and some as two separate words (tea club).
- Sometimes the form of a verb in a sentence names the action but does not change according to tense, number or person. Such a form is known as a **non-finite form** or an **infinitive**. An infinitive is used with or without 'to'.
Examples: How did people first begin **to drink** tea? Can you **name** the beverage?
Underline the infinitive in the following sentences.
 - It was funny to read words that stood still.
 - To be or not to be - that is the question.
 - Can I read the book?
 - They could help one another with the homework and talk about it.