

DIRECTIONS FOR TEACHERS

LISTENING SECTION

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION IN ENGLISH

Thursday, August 16, 2007—8:30 to 11:30 a.m., only

BE SURE THAT THE LISTENING SECTION IS ADMINISTERED TO EVERY STUDENT.

- 1 Before the start of the examination period, say:

Do not open the examination booklet until you are instructed to do so.

- 2 Distribute one examination booklet and one essay booklet to each student.

- 3 After each student has received an examination booklet and an essay booklet, say:

Tear off the answer sheet, which is the last page of the examination booklet, and fill in its heading. Now circle “Session One” and fill in the heading on each page of your essay booklet.

- 4 After the students have filled in all headings on their answer sheets and essay booklets, say:

Look at page 2 of your examination booklet and follow along while I read the **Overview** and **The Situation**.

Overview:

For this part of the test, you will listen to an account about the coffee culture, answer some multiple-choice questions, and write a response based on the situation described below. You will hear the account twice. You may take notes on the next page anytime you wish during the readings.

The Situation:

Your economics class has been studying the impact of national business chains. In preparation for a classroom debate, you have chosen to write a position paper pointing out the positive impact of national chains on independent vendors. In preparation for writing your position paper, listen to an account by reporter Lynn Rothenberg about the coffee shop business. Then use relevant information from the account to write your position paper.

Now I will read the passage aloud to you for the first time.

- 5 Now read the passage aloud, including the attribution at the end. Read with appropriate expression, but without added comment.

Listening Passage

...In Europe, stretching time is an attitude, a culture, even an art. Luxuriating over a cup of coffee while discussing politics, literature or life seems to come more naturally there than in the U.S. But here, some exceptions exist where café culture survives: large cities with European and international influence, college towns, and resort areas like the Berkshires [in Massachusetts]. For the most part, though, American suburban residents often ask themselves, why go out for coffee when they can make it themselves at home? This notion ignores the integral ingredient of coffee culture—the pleasure of connecting with friends, and that most foreign of concepts—slowing down.

The dearth of coffee culture opportunities began to change during the 1990's as American tastes evolved as a result of international influences. More cafés opened in cities, even in the suburbs. But the main force of this change in the landscape was a large publicly owned company from Seattle—Starbucks.

Many have boycotted this gargantuan coffee peddler and remained loyal to the independents, thus supporting a small cadre of distinctive and personal locally owned establishments. Oddly enough, it appears that Starbucks has not been as much of a threat to the local café as initially imagined.

I recently spoke with three successful independent coffee vendors in the capital district: Lee Cohen of The Daily Grind on Lark Street in Albany and Broadway in Troy; Dan Murphy of Uncommon Grounds on Western Avenue in Albany and Broadway in Saratoga Springs; and Frank Figliomeni of Professor Java's on Wolf Road [in Colonie]. They agree that the influence of Starbucks on American culture has been to introduce people to the idea of setting time aside and hanging out over a cup of coffee without guilt. This, in turn, has been good for their business.

Cohen, who has co-owned The Daily Grind since 1980, recently said: "Starbucks has the power to introduce people to coffee, people who would never even think about the concept. They educated the United States on coffee."...

Figliomeni wouldn't mind if Starbucks opened next door, because he has a service they can't provide. "We know every customer that comes in. We have a product made on the premises. We do what Starbucks can't do. We're built into the community; we have a relationship." In fact, Starbucks is nearly next door at the southern end of Wolf Road.

Murphy, who opened Uncommon Grounds in 1992 in Saratoga and 1997 in Albany, is unfazed by the large chain and claims it has not had an impact on his business. "If you have a mediocre shop, and you're the only one in town, if Starbucks comes in you might be in trouble. But if you have a good product, it doesn't matter." In his view, while Starbucks may be a billion dollar company, each store doesn't offer any more than a good local coffee shop, albeit with higher prices.

Cohen explained that prices at Starbucks are always more expensive because the corporation consistently rents prime real estate with high rent. While it's difficult for the independent to raise the price of his product, when the "leader" comes in with the higher prices, "You can raise the price 50 cents and still be under."

Cohen is comfortable with his persona as an independent coffee vendor and says that while Starbucks is accessible from nearly any lane of traffic in large cities, he has elected to remain small. "I think we do better than Starbucks in many ways, but not in volumes of money." He recalled one day when a customer had come in for coffee, then said they forgot their money at home. "I'll get it next time," Cohen told them. "You wouldn't get that at a chain store."

Cohen, Murphy and Figliomeni have met the challenge of being independent in a variety of ways. Murphy's Uncommon Grounds is a half bagels/half coffee shop, which has kept business steady since incorporating the concept in 1997. The three men roast their own

beans, providing customers a truly fresh cup of coffee made from beans roasted that day—and in some cases just minutes before.

Like many other small business owners competing in today's marketplace, Cohen has turned to the internet. Now, through his internet sales of coffee machines, as well as coffee, he is in the same ring as the larger companies, like Peet's from California and Starbucks. Previously, Cohen's limitations were Albany, but now he says he's limited only by those who use 220, which refers to European voltage as compared to American at 110.

At Professor Java's, Figliomeni offers conference rooms where neighboring corporate businesses can meet. Also, he ships coffee to customers who initially discovered his café during layovers at nearby Albany International Airport. "One customer at a time. It's a Dean Witter thing," he said. "Business is good. You have to make it good."...

The three coffee houses, Uncommon Grounds, The Daily Grind and Professor Java[s] all offer shade grown, organic, and fair trade coffee. They all agree that if customers ask for it, they'll make a point of carrying it, and indeed, it has become a request they hear more and more.

While many Americans still feel compelled to hurry to everywhere and to nowhere like the Little White Rabbit, it is becoming more common to visit a café and find full tables in the afternoon or evening. The notion of slowing down is still a hard one for our scurrying culture to swallow, but it does appear to be settling in, sip by sip. And if more people are asking for social and environmental qualification of their brew, then perhaps one day the farmers will consistently be paid a living wage and the songbirds will have the distinctive habitat, which they travel so far to find.

— excerpted from "Coffee Culture,"
Capital District Home Style, July, 2004

6 After reading the passage aloud once, say:

You may take a few minutes to look over **The Situation** and your notes.
(Pause) Now I will read the passage aloud a second time.

7 Read the passage a second time.

8 After the second reading, say:

Now turn to page 4 of your examination booklet, read the directions, and answer the multiple-choice questions. Be sure to follow all the directions given in your examination booklet and your essay booklet. You may now begin.

