

Teacher's Guide for Label Reading Exercise

We did this exercise after brainstorming about global issues, looking at the table of contents for several textbooks and talking about the topics we would cover in class. In addition, I had introduced the final project, wherein the students would choose an issue and do some action to affect that issue, then write about both the issue and their experience. The purpose of this label reading exercise was to introduce students to both the genre and vocabulary of labels, and also give them ideas for simple actions (ie buying / not buying certain products) that affect global issues. One of my primary goals in this class is to show students the power (and thus responsibility) that we as individuals have. One of the big ways we exercise our power (often without thinking) is by spending money.

First, do the pre-discussion questions. This gets the students focused and gets them thinking about these issues in English. I would put the students into groups of three or four. After letting them talk in groups for 7-10 minutes, I might spend a minute or two eliciting some answers in to discuss in the whole class setting, particularly for question number one. If I had time, I might make a list of the issues and the products that affect them on the board.

Next, give each student an item. The handout that I made is a photocopy of every item's label, but I also gave each group one of the physical items. I think that makes it more interesting. They filled out the label reading handout based on their label, pulling out words and phrases and explaining the relevance. I think we spent about 15 minutes on this. If they finished earlier, I encouraged them to look at some of the other groups' labels. Afterwards, getting the class back together, I went around from group to group asking each to give us a word or phrase. I wrote these on the board and had the students explain what they meant. I clarified stuff as needed.

For homework, I asked students to find a label at home and see what information they could get from it. Many students chose products with environmentally-aware labels, but this isn't necessary. I also ask students what additional information they would like to know about the product, and where they might find it. My intention here is to highlight the information that is (and is not) readily available about a product.

Label Reading Pre-Discussion

1. What global issues are affected by the products we buy? How are they affected?
2. Do you pay attention to these effects when shopping? What else do you think about when choosing what to buy? (price, quality, brand name, country of origin, how it is produced, environmental friendliness, whether or not you need it, something else?)
3. How do you find the information you need to make your shopping decisions?

Label Reading Exercise

Look at your group's item. What information does the label give you? What does it tell you about where / how / why the product was made? Which global issues does it address? Take notes below, and write down the specific phrases that reveal the companies attitude about these global issues. One person in the group will explain what you've found to the class. If you finish looking carefully at your label, feel free to look at the labels of the other groups.

<i>Word or Phrase</i>	<i>What does this tell you about the product or global issue?</i>

Label Reading Homework

Please choose a product you recently bought and write a couple of paragraphs about the information on its label. Use the following questions as prompts.

What information does the label tell you? How important is this information to you?

What other information do you know about the product? How did you find it out?

What additional information would you like to know about the product?

Why did you buy this particular product? What did you base your decision on?

What, in general, do you like to know about the products you buy? How do you make shopping decisions?

Where do you get your information?