



WATCH & LEARN: BUSINESS HISTORY
PRODUCTIVITY TOOLS: CAFFEINE
COFFEE & CAPITALISM (5:53 min)
VIDEO Script & Vocabulary (page 1 of 2/v32082))

INTERMEDIATE (B1 - B2) AND ABOVE

- ◊ Read the script and note new vocabulary
- ◊ Write three sentences using new vocabulary
- ◊ Prepare for the discussion questions

Starting Off

Michael Pollan, author of "This is Your Mind on Plants", goes into the history of coffee drinking, breaking down its origins and how it benefits humankind.

- 1 Read the **Video Script** below. The words in **bold** are defined in the **Vocabulary** section. Look up any new words in a dictionary.
- 2 Go to the **Your Turn** section at the end of this document. Practice using new words and expressions from the video script to prepare for your next class.
- 3 Look at the **Discussion Questions** and prepare your responses for the next class.

Video Script:

Narrator: 90% Of the world's adults consume some form of caffeine every day, making it the most widely used **psychoactive drug** on earth. Michael Pollan, best-selling author of books on plant **pharmacology** explains why.



Michael Pollan: A very strong case can be made that caffeine contributed to the Enlightenment and the Age of Reason and the Industrial Revolution, all of which required us to think in much more focused, **linear** terms. Caffeine was an amazing aid to the rise of capitalism.

Narrator: Compared to other beverages, coffee is a relative **newcomer**, **spreading** slowly from Africa, through the Middle East and into the West only a few centuries ago. Yet, it's hard to even imagine a world without it.

Pollan: Before caffeine comes to Europe, people were drunk or **buzzed** most of the day. People would have alcohol with breakfast. Water was contaminated with disease, but alcohol, because of the fermentation process, would kill a lot of microbes. So you gave your kids hard cider in the morning. There were beer breaks on farms. People **addled** on alcohol are not gonna be so rational, are not gonna be so linear in their thinking and are not gonna be so energetic.

Narrator: Coffee consumption, along with tea and chocolate, all of which have caffeine, became **widespread** in Europe in the 17th century, and coffee houses **popped up** all over London.

Pollan: So there were coffee houses dedicated to literature, and writers and poets would congregate there. There was a coffee house dedicated to selling **stock**, and that **turned into** the London Stock Exchange, eventually. There was another one dedicated to science, tied to the Royal Institution where great scientists of the period would **get together**, and Isaac Newton was a big coffee **fan**, Voltaire, the Enlightenment figure, apparently had 17 cups a day. I don't know quite how you do that.

Diderot wrote the encyclopedia on caffeine. This new, sober, more civil drink was changing the way people thought and the way they worked. Once you're doing work with machinery, indoors, doing **double-entry bookkeeping** and all that kind of head work, alcohol is the wrong drug, and caffeine is the right drug.

Video Script continued on next page...

Discussion Questions:

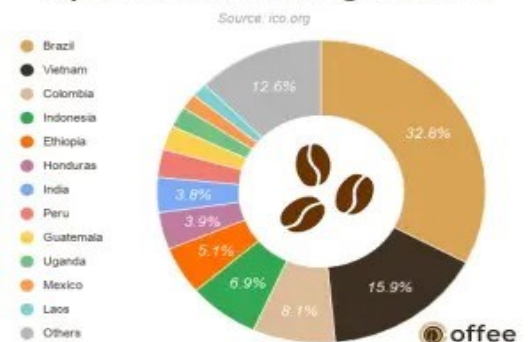
- ◊ Do you drink coffee or tea on a regular basis?
- ◊ Do you think it would be difficult to give up caffeine?
- ◊ How do you think coffee influences your ability to work and be productive?

Vocabulary:

- **psychoactive drug** - substances that affect the mind or behavior (aka: psychotropic)
- **pharmacology** - branch of medicine concerned with the uses, effects, and modes of action of drugs
- **linear** - progressing from one stage to another in a single series of steps; sequential
- **newcomer** - person or thing who has recently arrived in a place
- **spread** - extend over a large or increasing area
- **buzzed** - slightly drunk; tipsy
- **addled** - unable to think clearly; confused
- **widespread** - found or distributed over a large area or number of people
- **pop up** - suddenly arrive or appear
- **stock** - the capital raised by a company or corporation through the issue and subscription of shares
- **turned into** - be transformed into or become a particular kind of thing or person
- **get together** - (of people) gather or assemble socially or to cooperate
- **fan** - enthusiast; supporter (short for fanatic))
- **double-entry bookkeeping** - accounting method where each transaction is recorded in 2 or more accounts using debits and credits

Vocabulary continued on next page...

Top 12 Coffee Producing Countries





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Video Script continued...

Caffeine allows you also to break your ties to the rhythms of the sun. Before caffeine, basically, people started work when the sun came up and stopped when it went down. With caffeine and with light or gas light, you could have a **night shift**, you could now have an overnight shift.

Narrator: It's not hard to see a **through-line** from **coffeed-up** workers **keeping up** with the **pace** of the machines in the factories, to the rise of office culture and the establishment of the coffee break in the 1950s. Caffeine has made us super-productive.

Pollan: There's a very interesting body of research that suggests that caffeine does improve focus and memory and the ability to learn. So it seems to help us **lock in** memories. As for focus, it increases our ability to concentrate on a task, it's incredibly important for modern work.

Narrator: And of course, caffeine also gives us a **burst of energy**, but how exactly? Coffee has less than five calories.

Pollan: Caffeine seemed to be in violation of the laws of thermodynamics. Essentially, caffeine borrows energy from your future and gives it to you in the present. Caffeine occupies a receptor that normally is occupied by a chemical called adenosine, and this is the chemical that, over the course of the day, **builds up** and makes you feel tired and prepares the brain for sleep. Caffeine gets in there and blocks that receptor so you never feel that tiredness.

Narrator: Right, and that's the **catch**. Caffeine **messes with** your sleep because four to six hours after you drink it, half of it is still **swirling around** in your body.

Pollan: But even if you **cut it out** earlier in the day, the quality of your sleep may suffer. Not the quantity, necessarily, but the quality. By which, I mean your deep sleep, your slow wave sleep, a kind of sleep that's dreamless and very deep and is very important to kind of brain hygiene. That's where your brain kind of takes out the garbage every night and cleans up the desktop. And that kind of sleep suffers. So **there's no free lunch**, right, in nature and in medicine.

Narrator: So is the price we pay for poor sleep worth the benefits that caffeine gives us?

Pollan: There've been decades of research into caffeine, and the current research is that, **on balance**, it contributes much more to your health than it **takes away**. And that it's protective against many kinds of cancer, cardiovascular disease, Parkinson's, dementia. In the American diet, coffee and tea represent the single biggest source of **antioxidants**, and antioxidants are very important to cellular health and preventing cancer. And we eat so few plants, so few vegetables and fruit in this country, that we're getting most of those antioxidants from coffee and tea. It's kind of remarkable that it has such a **clean bill of health** with that one exception of what it does to your sleep or what it can do to your sleep.

Narrator: Right. Caffeine ruins our sleep so that the next morning we reach for more caffeine and the cycle of addiction continues.

Pollan: You know, we tend to **moralize** addiction, but is it really a bad thing to be dependent on a plant that you have easy access to, you can afford, that isn't ruining your life and is giving you some benefit? The way in which individuals are addicted to caffeine is mirrored in our society. We have organized our society in such a way with, like, globe-spanning trade, working long hours and changing the climate and changing the environment. We have created a world in which caffeine is **indispensable**, and therefore, the coffee plant and the tea plant are indispensable. And we've created exactly the world they need in which to **thrive**. So, I can't think of a more **clever** evolutionary strategy.

Vocabulary continued...

- **night shift** - period of time worked at night in a factory, hospital, etc
- **through-line** - connecting theme, plot, or characteristic in a film, television series, book, etc
- **coffeed-up** - high on caffeine
- **keep up the pace** - move or progress at the same rate as someone or something else
- **lock in memory** - preserve; internalize
- **burst of energy** - short, sudden increase in energy
- **build up** - accumulate or collect
- **catch** - the negative consequence of something that is otherwise good
- **mess with** - disrupt; disturb
- **swirl around** - circulate
- **cut it out** - eliminate; stop engaging in a certain activity or behavior
- **there's no free lunch** - you don't get something for nothing; or anything one receives for free will be paid for in another way
- **on balance**
- **takes away** - subtract; reduce
- **antioxidant** - substance such as vitamin C or E that removes potentially damaging oxidizing agents in a living organism
- **clean bill of health** - healthy;
- **moralize** - interpret or explain as giving lessons on good and bad character and conduct
- **Indispensable** - absolutely necessary
- **thrive** - grow or develop vigorously ; flourish
- **clever** - quick to understand, learn, and devise or apply ideas; intelligent