

CHAPTER 8

The Slow Food Movement

How often do you make your own meals and eat them with friends and family? How often do you shop at a market for fresh, locally grown food? Participants in the Slow Food movement try to do these things daily. They also believe that buying locally grown food is the best way to enjoy tasty food, ensure sustainable production, and support local farmers. The Slow Food movement encourages gastronomic pleasure, sustainable agriculture, and cultural revitalization. However, not everyone agrees that it will achieve these goals. **Is the Slow Food movement the best way to address today's rapid pace of life, destruction of farmland, and loss of cultural traditions?**

In this chapter, you will

- learn vocabulary related to the Slow Food movement;
- choose effective vocabulary to express your opinion;
- clarify the subject of a sentence when writing;
- apply tips to help you read multi-clause, multi-phrase sentences;
- learn how to express opposing ideas;
- find academic sources;
- write persuasive essays.

GEARING UP



A. Are you a gastronome? If you are not sure what a gastronome is, read the following characteristics, as defined by Carlo Petrini, the founder of the Slow Food movement. Check the ones that apply to you.

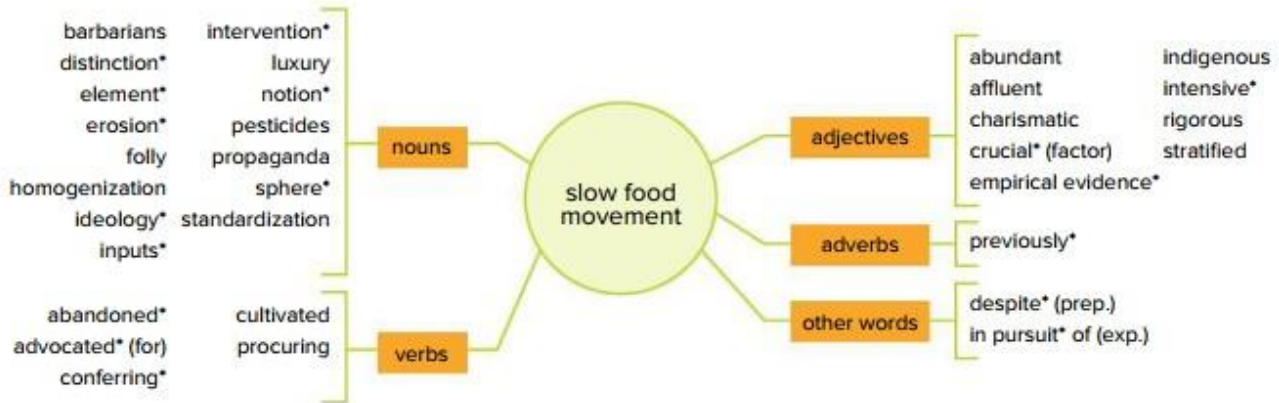
CHARACTERISTICS OF GASTRONOMES	YES	NO	SOMETIMES
1 insist on and take pleasure in eating good-quality food	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 appreciate food diversity and seek out new culinary experiences	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 avoid fast food (e.g., McDonald's) and object to it on principle	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 search for like-minded friends with whom you can share <i>good, clean, and fair</i> food	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 have an interest in learning about and understanding the complexity of the systems that bring food to our tables	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 believe that food should be produced in a sustainable way that does not damage the Earth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 believe farmers should be paid a reasonable wage for the food they produce, to bring a new dignity to food production	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8 believe that many of the world's problems are a result of our methods of food production	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

B. Discuss your answers with the class. Which characteristics are the most important for you and your classmates?

C. Go to the Slow Food International website. There are Slow Food groups, *convivia* (n. pl.), all over the world. Where is the *convivium* (n. sing.) nearest to you?

VOCABULARY BUILD OVERVIEW

Below are the key words you will practise in this chapter. Check the words you understand, then underline the words you use. Highlight the words you need to learn.



* Appears on the Academic Word List

READING 0

In Praise of Slowness: Turning the Tables on Speed

You might think the Slow Food movement is about taking more time to prepare and enjoy the food that you eat at your table—and you would be right. In fact, the expression *turning the tables* means reversing the situation to gain an advantage. However, Slow Food advocates are also concerned about the chain of actions that brings food to your table: the production, harvesting, and transporting of food, as well as the preparation and eating of it. This broader view of the food chain encourages concern for food-related issues, including the preservation of the environment, biodiversity, and local culture.

VOCABULARY BUILD

In the following exercises, explore key words from Chapter 8.

A. Read the following sentence that features the word *pesticides*.

Pesticides are believed to kill thousands of birds each year.

1 Write the definition of pesticides.

2 What is the root word in pesticides? What does it mean?

3 What is the suffix? What does it mean? What other words do you know that finish with this suffix?



B. Read each sentence and write one synonym and one antonym (where indicated) for each key word in bold.

SENTENCE	SYNONYM	ANTONYM
1 The need for an abundant supply of cheap food has led to standardized production of plants and animals.	<i>ample</i>	<i>scarce</i>
2 Carlo Petrini, a charismatic culinary writer, launched the Slow Food movement.		
3 The Slow Food movement is strongest in Europe, which has a rich tradition of indigenous cuisine and where fast food culture is less strongly established.		
4 Members of the Slow Food movement believe that the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and intensive feeding of animals, makes crops and livestock grow unnaturally quickly.		
5 According to Slow Food proponents, the rigorous breeding of pigs and cows to achieve maximum weight is also unnatural.		
6 In France, the Slow Food movement has advocated for the Pardigone plum and a delicate goat's cheese called Brousse du Rove.		
7 A defence of quiet material pleasure is the only way to oppose the universal folly of Fast Life.		
8 In the food industry, efficiency leads to homogenization .		
9 Manufacturers can process inputs —be they turkeys, tomatoes, or turnips—more quickly if they are all the same.		
10 Slow Food members also idealize "eco-gastronomy"—the notion that eating well can, and should, go hand in hand with protecting the environment.		

Before You Read

A. Working with a small group of classmates, discuss the following questions. When you have finished, share your answers with the rest of the class.

- 1 How much time do you spend preparing meals each week? How much time do you spend eating meals each week?
- 2 What methods do farmers (producers) use to speed up the natural growth processes of plants and animals? Here are some key words and phrases that you can use to discuss this question:

- pesticides
- antibiotics
- genetic modification
- speeding up animals' day/night cycle
- standardizing farming production

- 3 Consider the following quote from this reading: “A firm defence of quiet material pleasure is the only way to oppose the universal folly of Fast Life ... Our defence should begin at the table with Slow Food.” Do you agree or disagree? Why?

While You Read

B. While you read, think about where you could place the following headings in the reading. The spaces between the paragraphs have been assigned letters. Determine the best position for these headings, and write the corresponding letters next to the headings listed in the table. The first one has been done for you.

SUGGESTED HEADINGS	LOCATION
1 Fast Food Equals Fast Life	A
2 Fast Farming Methods	_____
3 History of Slow Foods to the Current Day	_____
4 What Slow Food Activists Do	_____
5 Slow Food in Europe and America	_____
6 Slow Food Supports Organic Farming and Biodiversity	_____

C. Compare your answers to a classmate’s. Fill in the headings in the text to help see the organization of the reading.

In Praise of Slowness: Turning the Tables on Speed

A:

Today, most meals are little more than refuelling **pit stops**. Instead of sitting down with family or friends, we often eat solo, on the move or while doing something else—working, driving, reading the newspaper, surfing the Net. Nearly half of Britons
 5 now eat their evening meal in front of the TV, and the average British family spends more time together in the car than they do around the table. When families do eat together, it is often at fast food [restaurants] like McDonald’s, where the average meal lasts eleven minutes ...

B:

10 The acceleration at the table is mirrored on the farm. Chemical fertilizers and pesticides, **intensive** feeding, antibiotic digestive enhancers, growth hormones, **rigorous** breeding, genetic modification—every scientific trick known to man has been deployed to cut costs, boost yields, and make livestock and crops grow more quickly. Two centuries ago, the average pig took five years to reach 286 kilograms;
 15 today, it hits 484 kilograms after just six months and is slaughtered before it loses its baby teeth. North American salmon are genetically modified to grow four to six times faster than the average. The small landowner gives way to the factory farm, which **churns** out food that is fast, cheap, **abundant**, and standardized.

pit stops (n.): quick stops a driver makes to refuel or for service repairs (e.g., in a car race)

churns (v.) out: produces large quantities of something without concern about the quality



tsunami (n.): large wave caused by extreme conditions (like an earthquake) that causes damage when it reaches land

artisanal (adj.): relating to artists

tackling (v.): dealing with a difficult problem

C:

20 As our ancestors moved into the cities and lost touch with the land, they fell in love with the idea of fast food for a fast age. The more processed, the more convenient, the better ... Many of us have swallowed the idea that when it comes to food, faster is better. We are in a hurry, and we want meals to match. But many people are waking up to the drawbacks of the “gobble, gulp, and go” philosophy. On the farm, in the
25 kitchen, and at the table, they are slowing down. Leading the change is an international movement with a name that says it all: Slow Food ...

D:

It all started in 1986, when McDonald’s opened a branch beside the famous Spanish Steps in Rome. To many locals, this was one restaurant too far ... To roll back the fast
30 food **tsunami** sweeping across the planet, Carlo Petrini, a **charismatic** culinary writer, launched Slow Food. As the name suggests, the movement stands for everything that McDonald’s does not: fresh, local, seasonal produce; recipes handed down through the generations; sustainable farming; **artisanal** production; leisurely dining with family and friends. Slow Food also idealizes “eco-gastronomy”—the **notion** that eating well
35 can, and should, go hand in hand with protecting the environment ...

E:

Petrini thinks this is a good starting point for **tackling** our obsession with speed in all aspects of life. The group states: “A firm defence of quiet material pleasure is the only way to oppose the universal **folly** of Fast Life ... Our defence should begin at the
40 table with Slow Food.”

F:

With its very modern message—eat well and still save the planet—Slow Food has attracted seventy-eight thousand members in more than fifty countries. In 2001, *The New York Times* named it one of the “eighty ideas that shook the world ...” Aptly
45 enough, Slow Food takes the snail as its symbol, but that does not mean the members are lazy or [slow] ...

G:

All over the world, Slow Food activists organize dinners, workshops, school visits, and other events to promote the benefits of taking our time over what we eat. Education is
50 key. In 2004, Slow Food opened its own University of Gastronomic Sciences at Pollenzo, near Bra, Italy, where students study not only the science of food but also its history and sensual character. The movement has already persuaded the Italian state to build “food studies” into the school curriculum. In 2003, Petrini himself helped the German government lay the groundwork for a nationwide “taste education” program.

H:

On the economic side, Slow Food seeks out artisanal foods that are on the way to extinction and helps them find a place in the global market. It puts small producers in touch with one another, shows them how to ... promote their products to chefs, shops, and gourmets around the world. In Italy, over 130 dying delicacies have been
60 saved, including lentils from Abruzzi, Ligurian potatoes, the black celery of Trevi, the

Vesuvian apricot, and purple asparagus from Albenga ...
Similar rescue operations are underway in other countries.
Slow Food is working to save the Firiki apple and traditional
olive oil-soaked ladotiri cheese in Greece. In France, it
65 has **advocated** for the Pardigone plum and a delicate
goat's cheese called Brousse du Rove.

I:

As you might expect, Slow Food is strongest in Europe,
which has a rich tradition of **indigenous** cuisine and
70 where fast food culture is less strongly established. But
the movement is also growing across the Atlantic. Its
American membership is eight thousand and rising. In
the United States, Slow Food helped persuade *Time*
magazine to run a feature on the Sun Crest peach of
75 Northern California, a fruit that tastes sublime but travels
badly. After the article appeared, the small producer was
overwhelmed with buyers wanting to sample his crop.

Slow Food is also leading a successful campaign to bring back the tasty rare-breed
turkeys—Narragansett, Jersey Buff, Standard Bronze, Bourbon Red—that were the
80 centrepiece of every American family's Thanksgiving supper until bland factory-
farmed birds took over ...

J:

As part of its ecological beliefs, Slow Food opposes the genetic modification of
foodstuffs and promotes organic farming. Nobody has conclusively proven that organic
85 food is more nutritious or better tasting than non-organic, but it is clear that the
methods used by many conventional farmers **take a toll on** the environment, polluting
the water table, killing off other plants and exhausting the soil. According to the
Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center in the United States, pesticides, directly or
indirectly, kill at least sixty-seven million American birds every year. By contrast, a
90 well-run organic farm can use crop rotation to enrich the soil and manage pests—and
still be very productive.

K:

Slow Food fights for biodiversity. In the food industry, efficiency leads to **homogenization**:
manufacturers can process **inputs**—be they turkeys, tomatoes, or turnips—more
95 quickly if they are all the same. So the farmers are required to concentrate on single
strains or breeds. Over the last century, for instance, the number of artichoke varieties
grown in Italy has tumbled from two hundred to about a dozen. Besides narrowing
our choice of flavours, the loss of animal variety upsets delicate ecosystems ... In
addition, when all you have is one breed of turkey, a single virus can wipe out the
100 whole species.

(1088 words)

Honoré, C. (2004). *In praise of slowness: How a worldwide movement is challenging the cult of speed*
(pp. 54–63). San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco.



take a toll on (exp.): have
a bad effect over a long
period of time

After You Read

D. Answer the questions to check your comprehension.

- 1 To increase efficiency, what “scientific tricks” must farmers use, and what benefits do they provide?

- 2 How did the Slow Food movement start?

- 3 Globally, what do Slow Food activists do?

- 4 Why does the Slow Food movement support organic farming and oppose genetic modification?

- 5 Why does the Slow Food movement support biodiversity?

- 6 The author of this reading is Carl Honoré; his book *In Praise of Slowness* is famous for exploring how to apply the Slow Food philosophy to many fields of human experience. Honoré has made a career of talking and writing about the Slow movement. Search online to learn about some of the activities he has been involved with. List some of them here.
