

Chocolate bars poisoned in Australia

URL: <http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0507/050702-chocolate.html>

Today's contents

The Article	2
Warm-ups	3
Before Reading / Listening	4
While Reading / Listening	5
After Reading	6
Discussion	7
Speaking	8
Listening Gap Fill	9
Homework	10
Answers	11

2 July, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Chocolate bars poisoned in Australia

BNE: Police in the Australian state of New South Wales are treating as extortion claims from an anonymous group that has alleged to have poisoned *Mars* and *Snickers* chocolate bars. The threat of contamination is being taken seriously by supermarkets and convenience stores, which have acted swiftly in removing all of the products from their shelves. Masterfoods, the food manufacturer licensed to make the chocolate bars in Australia, has already verified that tests undertaken on a *Snickers* bar contained an unidentified substance. The company said it did not wish to elaborate until further scientific analysis had finished and results were more conclusive.

Masterfoods is perplexed as to why its products are being targeted. It has received a number of threatening letters since May but none contains any demands for money. The company said its primary concern was for public health. A company spokesperson made a precautionary announcement for anyone who had recently purchased a *Mars* or *Snickers* bar to destroy it. Police are still entertaining the notion that the whole thing is a hoax and that a prankster with a grudge is behind the threats. *Mars* is Australia's best selling item of confectionery, while *Snickers* is the fourth most popular treat. Australian chocoholics are anxiously awaiting the green light to resume eating the chocolates.

WARM-UPS

1. ADVANTAGES: In pairs / groups, make a list of all of the advantages and disadvantages of eating chocolate. Change partners and compare your lists. When you have finished, talk about whether the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. Would the disadvantages make you cut down on or cut out chocolate?

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Police / Australia / extortion / poison / chocolate bars / convenience stores / being perplexed / public health / hoaxes / pranksters / chocoholics

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

3. CHOCOLATE: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "chocolate". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

4. PUBLIC HEALTH: With a partner, talk about how worried you would be if the police announced your favorite chocolate bars had been poisoned and placed on shelves in stores. What do you think of the following reactions?

- a. I'd take the threat seriously and not buy the chocolates until the police said it was OK.
- b. I'd continue to buy the chocolates. The chances of my buying one of the contaminated bars are virtually zero.
- c. I love chocolate too much. I'd die for chocolate. I would still buy it, whatever.
- d. I'd be a little cautious. I'd buy the chocolate bar but give some to my pet dog first to see if it's safe.
- e. No way. You have to be careful these days. It could be the latest form of terrorist activity from Al-Qaeda.
- f. I'd never buy another bar of chocolate again. It's getting too dangerous.
- g. It's a fantastic excuse to go on a quick diet.
- h. The whole thing sounds like a huge practical joke to me. It isn't very funny though. I'd still buy the chocolate bars.

5. YUM: In pairs / groups, talk about which of these chocolaty things would get you licking your lips and make your mouth water.

- Mars or Snickers bar
- Chicken in spicy chocolate sauce (Mexico)
- Chocolate ice cream
- Chocolate cake
- Chocolate and mustard bar (Japan)
- Chocolate milk shake
- Chocolate fondue
- Hot chocolate drink
- Chocolate coated banana
- Other

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. <i>Mars</i> and <i>Snickers</i> chocolate bars in Australia are poisonous. | T / F |
| b. Al-Qaeda has announced it poisoned chocolate bars in Australia. | T / F |
| c. Supermarkets have emptied their shelves of <i>Mars</i> and <i>Snickers</i> . | T / F |
| d. The manufacturer confirmed an alien chemical was found in a bar. | T / F |
| e. The manufacturer has received hundreds of threatening e-mails. | T / F |
| f. The group behind the threats wants \$10,000,000. | T / F |
| g. The police think a prankster with a grudge might be behind it all. | T / F |
| h. Australian chocoholics are seeking counseling due to the threats. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| a. extortion | contemplating |
| b. contamination | go-ahead |
| c. verified | definite |
| d. elaborate | confirmed |
| e. conclusive | cock-and-bull story |
| f. perplexed | blackmail |
| g. entertaining | grievance |
| h. hoax | expand |
| i. grudge | bewildered |
| j. green light | poisoning |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a. treating as | awaiting the green light |
| b. claims from an | substance |
| c. the threat | anonymous group |
| d. unidentified | is behind the threats |
| e. it did not wish | the notion |
| f. perplexed as to why its | of contamination |
| g. a number of | extortion |
| h. entertaining | products are being targeted |
| i. a prankster with a grudge | threatening letters |
| j. chocoholics are anxiously | to elaborate |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the correct spaces.

Chocolate bars poisoned in Australia

BNE: Police in the Australian state of New South Wales are treating as _____ claims from an anonymous group that has _____ to have poisoned *Mars* and *Snickers* chocolate bars. The _____ of contamination is being taken seriously by supermarkets and convenience stores, which have _____ swiftly in removing all of the products from their shelves. Masterfoods, the food manufacturer _____ to make the chocolate bars in Australia, has already _____ that tests undertaken on a *Snickers* bar contained an unidentified substance. The company said it did not wish to _____ until further scientific analysis had finished and results were more _____.

Masterfoods is _____ as to why its products are being targeted. It has received a _____ of threatening letters since May but none contains any demands for money. The company said its _____ concern was for public health. A company spokesperson made a _____ announcement for anyone who had recently purchased a *Mars* or *Snickers* bar to destroy it. Police are still entertaining the notion that the _____ thing is a hoax and that a prankster with a _____ is behind the threats. *Mars* is Australia's best selling item of confectionery, while *Snickers* is the fourth most popular _____. Australian chocoholics are anxiously awaiting the green light to _____ eating the chocolates.

licensed
threat
elaborate
extortion
acted
conclusive
verified
alleged

precautionary
treat
grudge
number
resume
primary
whole
perplexed

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words **'green'** and **'light'**.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the gap fill. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT CHOCOLATE SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about chocolate.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|--------------|----------------|
| • extortion | • perplexed |
| • seriously | • demands |
| • swiftly | • primary |
| • licensed | • entertaining |
| • substance | • grudge |
| • conclusive | • resume |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What was your initial reaction to this headline?
- b. Did the headline make you want to read the story?
- c. Did the article increase your concern over food safety in any way?
- d. Do you ever think about whether the food you buy is safe to eat?
- e. Have you ever suffered from food poisoning?
- f. Do you think the Australian authorities are over-reacting?
- g. Have similar food contamination incidents happened in your country?
- h. Do you think terror groups could contaminate food as a new way of frightening people?
- i. What do you think might be the motives of the contaminators?
- j. Would you buy a *Mars* or *Snickers* bar in Australia right now?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What did you think about what you read?
- c. What do you think about chocolate?
- d. Are you a chocoholic?
- e. What are your favorite foods that contain chocolate?
- f. Do you think this contamination incident is very serious?
- g. Do you think this incident could hurt Australia's chocolate industry?
- h. Have you ever been the target of a prankster or a hoax?
- i. Have you ever had a serious grudge against a company? Did you do anything against the company?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

ROLE PLAY: This role play is to discuss whether or not to give the green light for the resumption of sales of *Mars* and *Snickers* bars in Australia. Team up with classmates who have been assigned the same role as you. Develop your roles and discuss ideas and “strategies” before the role play begins. Introduce yourself to the other role players before the role play begins.

Student A

You are head of the food company. Profits are most important. No one has been ill. Your testing laboratories told you the unknown substance found in the chocolate bars came from the wrapping of the chocolate bar. The substance is harmless, unless taken in large quantities. You are convinced the chocolate bars are safe to eat.

Student B

You love playing practical jokes – the bigger the better. Pretend that you used to belong to Al-Qaeda but you were thrown out of the organization. You have “secret” information that Al-Qaeda’s new tactic is to poison people via chocolate bars. You tell everybody the wrapping from the chocolate bar poisons the chocolate.

Student C

You are a doctor who once treated student B for psychiatric problems. He/She suffered from a kind of schizophrenia and often believed he/she had a different personality. One of the effects of his/her condition was a love of practical jokes. The last time you heard from your patient was a postcard you received from Afghanistan.

Student D

You are the head of Australia’s security services. You cannot take any risks with public safety. You understand that Al-Qaeda can operate in many different ways. You have to make 100 per cent sure that the chocolate bars found pose no risk to your country. You must prepare a statement for the public. You will decide whether or not to allow the sale of the chocolate bars.

Change roles and repeat the role play. Comment in groups about the differences between the two role plays.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Chocolate bars poisoned in Australia

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Masterfoods is _____ its products are being targeted. It has received a number of threatening letters since May _____ any demands for money. The company said its primary concern was for public health. A company spokesperson made a _____ for anyone who had recently purchased a *Mars* or *Snickers* bar to destroy it. Police are still _____ that the whole thing is a hoax and that a _____ is behind the threats. *Mars* is Australia's best selling _____, while *Snickers* is the fourth most popular treat. Australian chocoholics _____ the green light to resume eating the chocolates.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on the Australian chocolate poisoning. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. CHOCOLATE: Create a fact sheet about the benefits and dangers of chocolate to your health. Show your fact sheets to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

4. LETTER: Write a letter to Australia's head of police in New South Wales. Give him/her advice on what he/she should do about the chocolate poisoning. Read your letter to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all give similar advice?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. F b. F c. T d. T e. F f. F g. T h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

a. extortion	blackmail
b. contamination	poisoning
c. verified	confirmed
d. elaborate	expand
e. conclusive	definite
f. perplexed	bewildered
g. entertaining	contemplating
h. hoax	cock-and-bull story
i. grudge	grievance
j. green light	go-ahead

PHRASE MATCH:

a. treating as	extortion
b. claims from an	anonymous group
c. the threat	of contamination
d. unidentified	substance
e. it did not wish	to elaborate
f. perplexed as to why its	products are being targeted
g. a number of	threatening letters
h. entertaining	the notion
i. a prankster with a grudge	is behind the threats
j. chocoholics are anxiously	awaiting the green light

GAP FILL:

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Masterfoods is **perplexed** as to why its products are being targeted. It has received a **number** of threatening letters since May but none contains any demands for money. The company said its **primary** concern was for public health. A company spokesperson made a **precautionary** announcement for anyone who had recently purchased a *Mars* or *Snickers* bar to destroy it. Police are still entertaining the notion that the **whole** thing is a hoax and that a prankster with a **grudge** is behind the threats. *Mars* is Australia's best selling item of confectionery, while *Snickers* is the fourth most popular **treat**. Australian chocoholics are anxiously awaiting the green light to **resume** eating the chocolates.