READING AND SPEAKING

Three plants that changed the world

1 Read the introduction to a book review. What is the book about?

Seeds of Change

By Henry Hobhouse
Reviewed by Donald Crisp

History books are full of the ways in which the actions of men and women have changed the world, but what about plants? Which plants have changed history? Henry Hobhouse, farmer and journalist, discusses this topic in his fascinating and illuminating book *Seeds of Change*.

2 Look at these drawings. Do you recognize the three plants?

3 All the words below appear in the article about the plants. Which words do you think go with which plant? Some go with more than one.

nouns:	addict soil fabric silk plantation slaves lung cancer luxury
verbs:	chain-smoke inhale ban sweeten refine chew harvest

4 Work in three groups.
Group A Read about tobacco. **Group B** Read about sugar. **Group C** Read about cotton.

5 Which words from exercise 3 are in your text? What are the bad effects of the plant? What are the good effects? Discuss in your group.

6 Compare plants with two students from the other groups. Answer the questions.

Which plant (or plants) . . .

- has been grown for thousands of years?
- was known as white gold? Why?
- was once thought to be a luxury?
- caused the American Civil War? Why?
- was the main American export until 1820?
- became the main American export after 1820?
- was harvested by slaves?
- has caused the death of many people?

What do you think?

- Which of the three plants has *most* changed history? How?
- Which plant has done the greatest good? Which has done the greatest harm?

Tobacco

For thousands of years **tobacco** was used by the American Indians with no ill-effect. In the 16th century it was brought to Europe. This early tobacco was mixed with soil and rather dirty. It was chewed or smoked in pipes only by men – women thought it smelly and disgusting.

It was first grown commercially in America in the 17th century on slave plantations. In the 18th century new technology refined tobacco and the first cigarettes were produced. By the 1880s huge factories were producing cigarettes which were clean and easy to smoke. Chain-smoking and inhaling became possible and by the middle of the 20th century tobacco addicts, both men and women, were dying of lung cancer in great numbers.

Nowadays cigarette smoking is banned in many places, especially in the USA. But until 1820 tobacco was America's main export, and still today their tobacco industry makes over $4.2 billion a year.

Sugar

Sugar cane was grown in India thousands of years ago. In Roman times it was known in Europe as a great luxury, and it was rare and expensive for many centuries after that. In 1493 Columbus took a sugar plant with him to the West Indies, where it grew so well that huge plantations were started by Europeans and worked on by slaves. The slaves were shipped across the Atlantic from Africa, packed sometimes one on top of the other in chains, on a journey that took six weeks. Many died. The empty ships then carried the sugar back to Europe. So much money was made that sugar was known as 'white gold'.

Sugar is used to sweeten food and make sweets and chocolate. It is addictive but unnecessary. By the 16th century the English were the greatest sugar-eaters in history. Elizabeth I lost *all* her teeth because she ate so much of it.

Cotton

Cotton has been grown for over five thousand years in places as far apart as Mexico, China, Egypt, and India. It was first planted in America in 1607. Before 1800 cotton was a great luxury, more expensive than silk, because so many workers were needed to pick it. However, a huge increase in the number of slaves in the American South resulted in much greater cotton production and a fall in the price. This, and the new technology of the industrial revolution, made cotton the cheapest fabric in history. By 1820 cotton was making more money for the USA than tobacco, and more money worldwide than sugar.

The American Civil War of 1861–1865 was fought because the Southern States wanted to form a separate country, so that they could continue to keep slaves on their cotton plantations. Slavery was banned in the Northern States in 1808. 500,000 soldiers were killed in the war.

LISTENING AND SPEAKING

The world's most common habit: chewing gum

1 Do you chew gum? How often? Stand up and ask the students in the class. Complete the chart below.

2 Discuss these questions as a class.

1 Who often chews gum? Who never chews gum?
2 When and where do you chew gum?
3 Where do you put it when it has lost its flavour?

3 You are going to listen to a radio programme about chewing gum. Check the meaning of these words. Which have an obvious connection with the topic of chewing gum? How?

skeleton *(n)*	to freshen (the breath) *(v)*	tree sap *(n)*
honey *(n)*	to wrap *(v)*	packet *(n)*
to hire *(v)*	billboard *(n) (Am. Eng.)*	

4 Read the statements below. Do you think they are true (✓) or false (✗)? Discuss with a partner.

1 ☐ One million tons of gum is chewed every year.
2 ☐ Chewing gum was invented in Sweden.
3 ☐ Chewing gum was found in the mouth of a nine thousand-year-old skeleton.
4 ☐ The first gum was made of tree sap and sugar.
5 ☐ Babies are born wanting to chew gum.
6 ☐ The ancient Greeks believed chewing gum was good for your health.
7 ☐ South American Indians made the first packets of chewing gum.
8 ☐ Chewing gum was taken to North America by the English.

T 11.3 Listen to part one of the programme and check your ideas. Correct the false sentences.

5 **T 11.4** Listen to part two of the programme. Answer the questions.

1 Who was William Wrigley?
2 What did he do to advertise chewing gum?
3 When did chewing gum become popular outside the USA?
4 What did the children shout?
5 What is today's chewing gum made of?

What do you think?

- Is chewing gum a common habit in your country?
- Is it considered a bad habit? Why/Why not?
- Is chewing gum good for you? Why/Why not?

EVERYDAY ENGLISH

Notices

1 When you first go to a foreign country, it can be difficult to understand notices. Here are some typical English notices. Match them with these places.

1 [c] a bank or a post office
2 [ ] a petrol station
3 [ ] a broken drinks machine
4 [ ] a road in a town
5 [ ] an airport
6 [ ] a pub
7 [ ] the Underground
8 [ ] a park
9 [ ] a zoo
10 [ ] a hotel
11 [ ] a railway station
12 [ ] a public toilet
13 [ ] a motorway

2 **T 11.5** Listen to five conversations. Where are the people?

3 Work with a partner. Choose two other places, and write conversations that could happen there. Read them to the class, and see if they can guess the place.