



# Connections

## Understanding Social & Cultural Issues

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**A book for improving language and critical  
thinking skills**

**by Robert Long  
Perceptia Press**

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*Understanding Social and  
Cultural Issues*

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PERCEPTIA PRESS

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## To the Teacher

Critical thinking is that mode of thinking—about any subject, content, or problem—in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully analyzing, assessing, and reconstructing it. *Connections* aims to develop students' critical thinking skills and their ability to express themselves in English. The textbook covers twelve topics including employment, food safety, technology, and the global financial crisis. Each chapter helps students to practice and develop their critical thinking skills. By using *Connections*, students will be able to better clarify and state questions or concerns, deal with complexity, and apply criteria with reason and objectivity. With more emphasis on critical thinking tasks, students can become more flexible and more able to consider a variety of world views with confidence. The world needs a great deal of positive change, and this will only come about from those who are confident enough in their beliefs, analysis, and ability to express their ideas using English in an international setting.

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# I: Food

*In Chapter I, you practice the critical thinking skill of prediction:  
Guessing the future based on current knowledge.*

## Conversation I

- Hiroshi:** Let's go out to eat. Where do you want to go?
- Yuki:** How about an American fast food restaurant? The food is always cheap.
- Hiroshi:** I think cheap food is often dangerous food. For good food, you have to pay a little more.
- Yuki:** You worry too much about food, Hiroshi. You really do! I'm sure you'll live a long and healthy life. Let's get a burger at that place on the corner.
- Hiroshi:** Hey, you know what they say, "You are what you eat." My father says it even better, "Only trash eat trash!"
- Yuki:** Well, you do have a point. But those American hot dogs look delicious, don't they?
- Hiroshi:** I'd prefer Thai or Chinese food. Besides, read this! It's about the import of American beef into Korea. I'm not sure that beef is safe anymore.

### *Riots in South Korea*

In mid-2008, there were large-scale demonstrations and even riots in the streets of South Korea. What were the demonstrations about? South Koreans were not complaining about price increases, nor taxes, nor any of the usual things that cause people to take to the streets. The riots were not even about low wages. Instead, it was food safety that was on their minds, and they were rioting about American beef being imported into the country. Many South Koreans view the safety of American beef with suspicion and believe that it may be dangerous for their health. In the riots, the South Koreans were demonstrating against their government for allowing the American beef into South Korea. Japan has had similar import bans due to the safety of American beef.



## Vocabulary

Put a [✓] if the English definition is correct and an [X] if it is incorrect.

a riot	暴動	✓	a) fighting and loud noise, usually on public streets
price	価格		b) measure of value, cost
taxes	税		c) money paid to the country
wages	賃金		d) payment for one's work
imported	輸入される		e) products from another country
dangerous	危ない		f) to cause injury or harm
to demonstrate	示すこと		g) to protest
a ban	禁止		h) to stop something
safety	安全		i) to protect, to reduce risk

## Critical Thinking: Prediction

Circle whether you agree or disagree with each of these predictions. Give a reason.

1. Agree / Disagree: If only a few shipments of this beef are bad, only a few people will be affected by it.  
.....

2. Agree / Disagree: If 10% of American beef is bad, then I think Japan should not import any at all.  
.....

3. Agree / Disagree: If 25% of American beef is bad, then Japanese should not allow any imports of beef.  
.....

4. Agree / Disagree: If Japanese care about their health, they should not eat any meat at all.  
.....

5. Agree / Disagree: If the government allows unhealthy food to enter Japan, we should demonstrate on the streets.  
.....

6. Agree / Disagree: Most people are very worried about food safety and think about it when shopping.  
.....



## Conversation 2

- Hiroshi:** So, what do you want for lunch today, Yuki?
- Yuki:** How about that salad? It looks good.
- Hiroshi:** It might not be fresh. Vegetables are mostly out of season, so if you eat them, you might get sick.
- Yuki:** Ok, this pasta looks good.
- Hiroshi:** Well, I don't know. Too much pasta can make you fat!
- Yuki:** Then maybe I should try this chicken casserole. It looks great.
- Hiroshi:** Ah, but I read about the chicken industry lately. Most chickens are not raised in a clean environment, so they are not healthy.
- Yuki:** Ah, thanks for the advice. In that case, I think I'll try the fish.
- Hiroshi:** No—bad idea! If you eat fish, you'll take in a lot of dioxins.
- Yuki:** How about this shrimp doria?
- Hiroshi:** Oh, I'd definitely avoid shrimp, as they are all raised on farms and have a lot of bacteria. If you eat shrimp, you might regret it tomorrow.
- Yuki:** So, seriously now, how about the *gyoza*?
- Hiroshi:** Well, sure... but wait a moment! Didn't I hear something about *gyoza* too? Well, of course, back in February 2008, there were cases of *gyoza* leading to food poisoning. So you definitely shouldn't touch them!
- Yuki:** Ok, then I'll just have a glass of milk.
- Hiroshi:** Oh no, that's a bad idea, too. Remember that tainted milk from China? That could be here, too. Melamine is a very dangerous substance, you know.
- Yuki:** Oh, come on! Really?
- Hiroshi:** Yes, read this. It's in today's newspaper.

### *Tainted Milk*

The problem of *tainted* milk began in China when it was discovered that melamine had been added to the milk. But an awareness of the issue is now spreading around the globe. Recently, it has been reported that zoo animals that were fed with a milk formula have been developing kidney stones. Tainted crackers in South Korea have been found and two people were reported ill in Hong Kong. Many Chinese products have been taken off supermarket shelves in the United Kingdom so that food inspectors can expand their testing of Chinese products that might contain melamine. So far, nearly 53,000 children in China have been sickened by infant formula, and four infants have died. A dozen countries from Asia to Africa have banned or recalled Chinese milk products.

## Critical Thinking: Prediction

If-then statements are a simple but powerful way to make predictions about the future. For making predictions, there are two important kinds of if-then statements. Look at the examples and check that you understand the difference.

Example

1. If I eat more vegetables and do more exercise, then I will be healthier.
2. If I ate more vegetables and did more exercise, then I would be healthier.

In 1, you can see the grammar structure: *if + present tense, then + will*. This indicates that the probability of this happening is quite high.

In 2, you can see the grammar structure: *if + past tense, then + would*. This indicates that the probability of this happening is much lower.

So, you can change the type of if-then statement in order to express high or low probability.

Make predictions by writing if-then statements about these issues. Then compare your answers with your classmates.

### Safety of American beef

1. If the American government introduced .....  
then .....
  2. If the Japanese government bans .....  
then .....
- > Classmate 1 thinks that .....
- > Classmate 2 believes that .....

### E-coli poisoned food in Japan

1. If Japanese farmers were .....  
then .....
  2. If people wash .....  
then .....
- > Classmate 1 thinks that .....
- > Classmate 2 believes that .....

Write other if-then statements about food safety. Be sure to use both types of if-then statement.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

## Personalize It

Think about your answers to the following questions. Then ask your partner.

1. What do you think about the safety of American beef?
2. Do you think South Koreans are correct in protesting American beef?
3. Have there been any problems with food being poisoned by e-coli in your country?
4. What kinds of things would you protest about?

# Sample Chapter

## Contradict This!

How would you disagree with the following statements?

Example

- American beef is not safe. Most American products are not safe.
- > *Contradiction:* No, all American beef is safe. Otherwise, Americans would not eat it.
- 
1. I think American beef doesn't taste as good as Japanese beef. There is a big difference in taste.
 

> *Contradiction:* No, .....
  2. Japanese need to protest against American imports.
 

> *Contradiction:* I disagree because .....
  3. South Koreans care more about their food safety than Japanese.
 

> *Contradiction:* That is incorrect. ....

## Debate

Circle the opinion that you agree with. Write three reasons to support your opinion. Your teacher might have you debate your ideas with someone who disagrees with you.

<b>Position A. You should <u>always</u> be careful to eat healthy food.</b>	<b>Position B. Eating healthy food is not <u>always</u> necessary.</b>
Reason 1 .....	Reason 1 .....
Reason 2 .....	Reason 2 .....
Reason 3 .....	Reason 3 .....

## Personalize It

Think about your answers to the following questions. Then ask your partner.

1. What do you remember about the incident concerning tainted milk?
2. What do you remember about the gyoza food poisoning incident in early 2008?
3. Do you think the Japanese or Chinese government was to blame for the gyoza problem?
4. Do you think the situation is any better now? Is food from China safer than before?

## Sample Chapter

### Contradict This!

How would you disagree with the following statements?

Example

Chinese food is very safe. It is, in fact, just as safe as Japanese food.

> *Contradiction:* No, I would say that it is a case by case situation. Sometimes Chinese food is safer.

1. I think this report was wrong. I think only a few Japanese ever got sick—maybe only ten.

> *Contradiction:* No, .....

2. The Chinese don't care about food safety. They only care about production and money.

> *Contradiction:* I disagree because .....

3. All food is becoming more and more dangerous with pesticides, dirty water, and e-coli.

> *Contradiction:* That is incorrect .....

## Debate

Circle the opinion that you agree with. Write three reasons to support your opinion. Your teacher might have you debate your ideas with someone who disagrees with you.

<b>Position A. Japan needs China.</b>	<b>Position B. Japan does not need China.</b>
Food from China is safe to eat, and Japan needs to import more Chinese food if it is going to prosper. Japan needs Chinese products. Japan needs China more than China needs Japan.	Food from China is not safe, and Japan should import only 10% of its requirements from China. Japan can always buy products from other countries. Japan does not need China.
Reason 1 .....	Reason 1 .....
Reason 2 .....	Reason 2 .....
Reason 3 .....	Reason 3 .....

# 2: City Life

In Chapter 2, you will practice the critical thinking skill of skepticism:  
Questioning claims, ideas, and values

## Conversation I

- Hiroshi:** Hey Yuki, let's go out to a park. After that test, I think that you and I need a little peace and quiet.
- Yuki:** Park? There are only two good parks in the city, and they are so crowded. Let's face it, there's no real peace and quiet where we live.
- Hiroshi:** Hmm, is that true? Aren't there any beautiful places at all in the city?
- Yuki:** Well... this is Japan. The city is very developed. There are buildings everywhere and very few green areas.
- Hiroshi:** Yes, but while there are buildings everywhere, there must be some nice gardens.
- Yuki:** Well, not in this city, but some cities in Japan are trying to change their policies. For example, did you hear that Kutchan in Hokkaido is limiting the number of new hotels?
- Hiroshi:** Yes, I did, and I think it's terrible. The Japanese economy is weak now, and the only way to ensure recovery is to allow cities to grow and grow.

How should Yuki respond to Hiroshi? What are your personal views?

- Yuki:** [A] Well, Hiroshi, I think that there should be a balance between buildings and natural scenery.  
[B] Yes, Hiroshi, you are absolutely right. There should be endless growth for all cities. More development means more money.
- Hiroshi:** That may be true, Yuki, but did you read this in today's paper?

### *Endless Development*

Kutchan has been growing very fast over the last few years. One important reason for this is the increasing number of lodging facilities for foreigners who come to ski at the popular resort. However, this endless development in Kutchan may be coming to an end. The city officials fear that more development would harm the town's scenery. There were 400 foreign visitors in 1997, but by 2007 this number had increased to 24,000. Most foreigners who come to ski in Kutchan choose condominiums rather than hotels. Because they generally stay an average of two weeks, the cost of staying at these condominiums is much lower than hotels. In addition, they have more living space and access to facilities such as a kitchen. Currently, there are 66 condominium blocks, and there are plans to build seventy more.

- Yuki:** Yes, I read that earlier, and I have to say that this is the one big problem with tourist cities. They just get too many visitors.