

19th Century literary non-fiction

Source B

This 1852 article considers the importance and effects of tea-drinking on society. It is from *The Leisure Hour*, a general-interest periodical.

A Little Chat About Tea

Of all the varied productions of the vegetable kingdom, there is scarcely any one that has acquired so much importance as tea. What images of happiness does the very name array before our eyes! How many delightful hours does recall! To an Englishman's mind it is a word of enchantment. It speaks to him of quiet evenings, cheerful faces, buoyant spirits, and sober mirth. It stands before him all day like a beckoning angel, and cheers him through the toils and vexations of business by unfolding to his fancy a home where all are waiting to welcome him. The tea-table is an important element in the history of the nation. It gathers around it the expression of half our social life. If this article of furniture had only been gifted with the double facility of understanding everything uttered in its vicinity, and profiting by what it heard, how wise it would have grown! How many secrets have been whispered over it! how many plans have been laid upon it! to how many fair hopes has it ministered support, and to how many doubts has it given solution! What should we do without it? Tea is a benefactor to all. It is endowed with sovereign delicacy against the crowd of little assailants which make war on social enjoyment; it soothes the nervous, cheers the desponding, and enlivens the dull. Still more important effects may be traced up to this potent source. The plaintiff rejoicing in the verdict which has just been pronounced in his favour, little dreams how close a connexion exists between that powerful statement of fact and eloquent appeal which carried his cause, and a few cups of tea. But for this humble helpmate the poet's imagination would often have drooped its wing, and the philosopher's have sunk overwhelmed in the midst of his gigantic labours. All honour, then, to the "bubbling and loud-hissing urn." It is only an act of decent gratitude to recount its praises.

Tea is a universal favourite not only with ourselves but also with other nations. No other candidate for our goodwill can boast so many certificates of merit. We read on its ample testimonial the names of almost every people under heaven. Here is a common point of union for all the races of mankind. The Caucasian here shakes hands with the Malay*, English, Dutch, Russian; the inhabitants of the hottest and the coldest climes alike attest its exhilarating virtues. This wondrous beverage seems actually endowed with the most opposite properties; it warms us in winter and refreshes us in summer; soothes and yet stimulates; fits us equally for action or repose. Born in the land of silk and cotton, it forms with them a truly illustrious trio; but though the youngest of the three, it is the greatest favourite, and is a welcome guest with millions to whom its associates are strangers.

Glossary

* indolence – laziness

* Malay – person from Southeast Asia

Sample Paper 2 Section A Question 3:

03 You now need to refer only to **Source B** from **lines 7 to 17**.

How does the writer use language to describe the importance of tea?

[12 marks]

This extract is from “A Little Chat About Tea” by author unknown in Volume 1 No. 1 of *The Leisure Hour* magazine (8th January 1852) and the full text can be found online at <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.a0006340913?urlappend=%3Bseq=38>.

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This resource is brought to you by Dr Catherine Charlwood, a former teacher, lifelong scholar and co-host of [LitSciPod: The Literature and Science Podcast](#). If you have questions, she can be contacted at catherine.charlwood@cantab.net.