

**SUMMARY**

Millions of people are stricken with food poisoning every year—and any one of them could tell you it's no fun. But a small number of cases are downright deadly. This fascinating nonfiction, which unfolds like a mystery, informs students of potential danger in our meals.

**LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS**

- Identifying cause and effect
- Reading for information
- Understanding main idea and supporting details
- Problem solving

**MAIN TEACHING OBJECTIVES**

After reading this story, students should be able to:

- Understand the cause-and-effect relationships that lead to food poisoning
- Understand why it can be difficult to identify the source of food problems
- Identify main ideas and supporting details
- Explore solutions that reduce the risk of food poisoning

**BEFORE READING**

**Prior knowledge:** Explain that food poisoning outbreaks happen when food gets contaminated by things like germs and bacteria. Ask students if they remember any stories in the news about food poisoning. Have there been any foods that their families stopped buying or eating because they might carry food poisoning? Has anyone in the class experienced food poisoning?

**DURING READING**

**Cause and effect:** Throughout most of this article, people try to figure out what caused the salmonella outbreak that sickened Christopher Meunier. Ask students to be on the lookout for causes and effects of different events. Pause to point out cause-and-effect relationships as they come up.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/  
WRITING PROMPTS**

- What details in the story show what it was like for Christopher to suffer

from food poisoning? (understanding supporting details) *His stomach hurt so much he couldn't move; 500 people a year die from what he had; he spent six days in the hospital.*

• Why can it be difficult for scientists to figure out the source of a food poisoning outbreak? (understanding cause and effect) *Our foods come from many different places across the country and the world; many foods have ingredients from more than one place.*

• Why is it important to identify where food poisoning originates? (drawing conclusions) *It is important to remove the source of the food poisoning from the food supply and prevent other people from eating it.*

• What happened at a Jack-in-the-Box restaurant? What then happened as a result? (understanding cause and effect) *Many children got sick, and four died from E. coli virus in the hamburgers. As a result, all fast-food hamburgers are cooked to 150 °F to kill E. coli, and stricter laws and a tracking system were put in place.*

• How did "Team Diarrhea" figure out where the salmonella outbreak was coming from? (understanding main idea) *They looked for foods that many of the victims had eaten; they narrowed the search down to peanut butter; they found where the peanut butter was made and what else came from the same plant.*

• What is the purpose of the Food Safety Modernization Act of 2009? What specific actions would it require? (reading for information) *The purpose is to make our food supply safer through more inspections, better labeling, and public awareness.*

**Creating a food-safety brochure:** Have students explore ways to avoid food poisoning and then make an illustrated brochure with food-safety tips. They might include washing fresh fruits and vegetables before eating them, cooking food to a safe temperature, and so forth. **Check out [www.foodsafety.gov](http://www.foodsafety.gov) for more tips.**

**Supporting details graphic organizer:** Ask students to complete a graphic organizer identifying three big ideas from

the article and three details to support each idea. Depending on the level of your students, you can have them think of their own main ideas or provide them with these: **1.** Outbreaks of food poisoning have sickened millions of Americans. **2.** Food poisoning can be difficult to control for several reasons. **3.** Steps can be taken to prevent food poisoning. Create your own graphic organizer.

**FOR MORE ADVANCED STUDENTS**

Have students explore the steps food takes to get from its source to your table. Invite each student to pick a favorite food and research where it comes from, what is required to grow or produce it, store it, package it, and ship it to the store or restaurant where their families could buy it. What could go wrong along the way, exposing the food to unsafe conditions? Finally, have students display their findings in a poster.

**WRITING PROMPTS**

**Persuasive:** Ask students to write a persuasive essay about ways to improve the school cafeteria, including ways to make the food safer.

**Letter:** After reading this article, students might have questions about food safety, laws, prevention and treatment tips, and more. Ask them to think of three questions they have and write a letter to a food-safety expert (real or imaginary), posing their questions.

**Reproducibles**

Skills and Test-Prep Online

Go to [www.scholastic.com/storyworks](http://www.scholastic.com/storyworks) to print out the following activities that can be used with this article:

- Comprehension Quiz
- Critical Thinking Questions
- Vocabulary
- Summarizing/Details
- Detective's Notebook