

**Passage 1.** *Stan Rogers highlights the problems of the modern diet.*

- 1 For most people across the world, life is getting better but diets are getting worse. This is the bittersweet dilemma of eating in our times. Our free and comfortable lifestyles are undermined by the fact that our food is killing us, not through lack of it but through its abundance – a hollow kind of abundance.
- 2 At no point in history have edible items been so easy to obtain. Yet, where humans used to live in fear of disease, now the leading cause of mortality worldwide is diet. Most of our problems with eating stem from the fact that we have not yet adapted to the new realities of plenty, either biologically or psychologically. 5
- 3 “Everything in moderation” doesn’t quite cut it in a world where the “everything” for sale in the average supermarket has become so sugary and so immoderate. This is paradoxical and sad, because good food – good in every sense, from flavour to nutrition – used to be the test by which we judged the quality of life. A good life without good food should be a logical impossibility. 10
- 4 As things stand, our culture is far too critical of the individuals who eat junk food and not critical enough of the corporations who profit from selling them. A survey of more than 300 international policymakers found that 90% of them still believed that personal motivation – or, willpower – was a very strong cause of obesity. This is absurd. It makes no sense to presume that there has been a sudden collapse in willpower across all ages and ethnic groups. What has changed most is not our collective willpower but the marketing and availability of energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods. Some of these changes are happening so rapidly it is almost impossible to keep track. Sales of fast food grew by 30% worldwide from 2011 to 2016 and sales of packaged food grew by 25%. 15
- 5 Almost every country in the world has also experienced radical changes to its patterns of eating over the past five, 10 and 50 years. For a long time, nutritionists have held up the “Mediterranean diet” as a healthy model for people in all countries to follow. But recent reports from the World Health Organisation suggest that even in Spain, Italy and Crete, most children no longer eat anything like a “Mediterranean diet” rich in olive oil and fish and tomatoes. These Mediterranean children are, as of 2017, among the most overweight in Europe. In every continent, there has been a common set of changes from savoury foods to sweet ones, from meals to snacks, dinners cooked at home to meals eaten out, or takeaways. 20
- 6 The nutrient content of our meals is one thing that has radically changed; the psychology of eating is another. We are often told in a slightly hectoring way that we should make “better” or “smarter” food choices, yet the way we eat now is the product of vast impersonal forces that none of us asked for. The choices we make about food are largely predetermined by what are available and by the limitations of our busy lives. Many people use food as a coping mechanism to deal with feelings such as stress, boredom, anxiety, or even to prolong feelings of joy. While this may help in the short term, eating to soothe and ease our feelings often leads to regret and guilt, and can even increase the negative feelings. We are not actually coping with the problem causing the stress. Furthermore, our self-image may suffer as we gain weight. 30
- 7 It is becoming abundantly clear that the way most of us currently eat is not sustainable – either for the planet or for human health. Thankfully, various countries have made some headway through the provision of information and working through schools. In 2014, Ecuador passed a mandatory traffic light labeling policy for packaged foods, while voluntary labeling schemes are used in countries such as Denmark and Sweden. Peru, Uruguay, and Costa Rica have all banned “junk food” in public schools since 2012, and the UK released new school food standards in 2014, limiting fried foods and desserts, and emphasising water, whole grains, fruits and vegetables. 40
- 8 One can only hope that more countries around the world will take action to create environments in which it is easier to feed ourselves in a manner that is both healthy and joyous.

**Passage 2.** *Bee Wilson argues that clean eating is a flawed solution to the problems of the modern diet.*

- 1 At its simplest, clean eating is about ingesting nothing but “whole” or “unprocessed” foods. Some versions of clean eating have been vegan, while others espouse various meats and something mysteriously called “bone broth” (stock, to you and me). At first, clean eating sounded modest and even homespun: rather than counting calories, you would eat as many nutritious home-cooked substances as possible. 5
- 2 But it quickly became clear that “clean eating” was more than a diet; it was a belief system, which propagated the idea that the way most people eat is not simply fattening, but impure. Once the concept of cleanliness had entered the realm of eating, it was only a matter of time before the basic idea spread contagiously across Instagram, where fans of #eatclean could share their artfully photographed green juices and rainbow salad bowls. Among the affluent classes who already ate a healthier-than-average diet, the Instagram goddesses created a new model of dietary perfection to aim for. For the rest of the population, however, it simply placed the ideal of healthy food ever further out of reach. 10
- 3 However much the concept of clean eating has been logically refuted and publicly reviled, the thing itself shows few signs of dying. Even if you have never knowingly tried to “eat clean”, it is impossible to avoid the trend altogether, because it changed the foods available to all of us, and the way they are spoken of. Why has clean eating proved so difficult to kill off? The interesting question is not whether clean eating is nonsense, but why so many intelligent people decided to put their faith in it. 15
- 4 Clean eating is perhaps best seen as a dysfunctional response to a still more dysfunctional food supply: a dream of purity in a toxic world. To walk into a modern western supermarket is to be assailed by aisle upon aisle of salty, oily snacks and sugary cereals, of cheap, sweetened drinks and meat from animals kept in inhumane conditions. Affluence and multinational food companies replaced the hunger of earlier generations with an unwholesome banquet of sweet drinks and convenience foods that teach us from a young age to crave more of the same. Wherever this pattern of eating travelled, it brought with it dramatic rises in ill health, from allergies to cancer. 20
- 5 When mainstream diets start to sicken people, it is unsurprising that many of us should seek other ways of eating to keep ourselves safe from harm. Our collective anxiety around diet was exacerbated by a general impression that mainstream scientific advice on diet – inflated by newspaper headlines – could not be trusted. First these so-called experts tell us to avoid fat, then sugar, and all the while people get less and less healthy. What will these “experts” say next, and why should we believe them? 25
- 6 Into this atmosphere of anxiety and confusion stepped a series of gurus offering messages of wonderful simplicity and reassurance: eat this way and I will make you fresh and healthy again. However, this way of thinking is especially dangerous because it obscures the message that, in fact, small changes in diet can have a large beneficial impact. If you think you cannot be healthy unless you eat nothing but vegetables, you might miss the fact that there are substantial benefits from raising your fruit-and-veg intake from zero portions a day to just two. 30
- 7 Among its many other offences, clean eating is a series of claims about food that are all or nothing – which only serves to underline the fact that most people, as usual, are stuck with nothing. 35

*Adapted from <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2017/aug/11/why-we-fell-for-clean-eating>*