



Bananas!!

Banana peels, banana splits, banana breads, bananas on cereal or in milk shakes. America is in love with this fascinating, yummy fruit. But wait. Bananas seem very different from other fruits, like apples and peaches. The seeds inside are very tiny and we eat them, and banana trees don't look like trees at all. That is because they *aren't* trees. The banana is actually a gigantic herb that springs from an underground stem and is considered by scientists to be a form of a berry. This tropical plant is closely related to an exotic, tropical flower, the orchid. What appears to be a trunk is actually a false stem formed by tightly wrapped leaves that grow to a height of nine feet. The flowers that eventually become the bananas we eat grow at the end of a three-foot-long stem. The flowers have huge, pointed purple buds that gradually open to expose the yellow stamens and pistils inside. When the plant is full of 20 to 30 bananas, the whole thing is called a "hand" and is picked while all of the bananas are still green.

Bananas have a long tradition in American history. They were introduced to the United States in 1876 at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition (a year-long celebration commemorating America's 100th birthday). Each banana was wrapped in foil and sold for 10 cents—about the same cost as a banana today! The average American eats about 10 pounds of bananas a year, but the average European eats almost 22 pounds!

Want to stay young? Bananas are an excellent source of potassium, which is thought to retard the aging process. Want a snack before a fast game? They also contain lots of easily digested carbohydrates for quick energy. Want to stay healthy? Bananas have large amounts of Vitamins A and C. Want to eat healthy foods but stay thin? Bananas are low in protein and fat and are an excellent between-meal snack. A medium-sized banana has only about 125 to 130 calories. Have a tummy ache? Bananas are one of the most easily digested and nutritious foods.

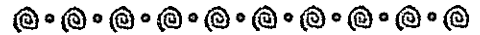
And how else do we like our bananas? In muffins, cakes, suspended in jello? Or dipped in chocolate and frozen on a stick? Layered on bread with peanut butter? These are all great, but no, the favorite way to eat a banana is just to eat it! It is perfectly packaged in a throwaway, recyclable container (its peel), can be carried anywhere, and doesn't need refrigeration. Don't you want to eat one of these delicious yellow *berries* right now?

By Mary Rose



Dear Parents

As your child reads this article aloud, listen for how the author presents the positive characteristics of this favorite fruit, the banana. Help your child see that an author's purpose in writing about a subject affects how he or she presents the information. This is a good first step toward encouraging kids to critically view television commercials and magazine ads.



TIP OF THE WEEK

A good persuasive writer convinces readers to feel or act in a certain way because they believe they will profit from that act. Thus, children are led to believe they can run faster and jump higher if they eat Wheaties or wear Air Jordan sports shoes, whereas the real reason manufacturers want consumers to buy those products is so they can make a profit. It's never too early for kids to learn this lesson! Help them to find the persuasive techniques used in "Bananas!!"

The Questions



1. What two things are in the article just to make the banana sound interesting to you, the reader?
 1. _____
 2. _____
2. This article was written to persuade you to eat a banana. Persuasive writing must point out how certain actions will benefit you, the reader. How can your life be better if you eat a banana?
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____

We have completed this assignment together.

Child's Signature

Parent's Signature