

## Company of the month: The Bottled Water Industry

### *Pre-reading activity*

#### 1) In pairs discuss these statements. Are they true or false?

- a) Bottled mineral water is a total waste of money.
- b) There is little difference between tap water and bottled water.
- c) Bottled water is cleaner than tap water.
- d) Most tap water contains fluoride.
- e) Bottled water sometimes costs two thousand times the price of tap water.

#### 2) Read the first part of the text and choose the correct alternatives to complete the sentences which follow.

### *Introduction*

Everybody needs to drink water. As children, teenagers and adults consume greater quantities of sweetened and flavoured drinks, we are increasingly learning the importance of drinking lots of plain, clean water.

Scientists say we should drink eight glasses of water each day. Only 34% of North Americans say that they drink eight glasses of water per day.

Tap water is perfectly drinkable in most countries. It contains very small quantities of stannous fluoride which has been added because it makes our teeth stronger.

The bottled water industry is now a very important industry worldwide characterised by very low raw material costs and enormous profit margins. The main costs in the bottled water industry come from packaging, marketing and distribution. The product is virtually free.

We all complain about petrol prices, but we willingly pay more for a litre bottle of water than we pay for a litre of petrol.

- a) We should all drink | many | much | more water.
- b) The consumption of sweetened and flavoured drinks is | increasingly | increasing|.

- c) Most North Americans don't drink | enough | each | water.
- d) Stannous fluoride is added to tap water | in order to | so | strengthen our teeth.
- e) The bottled water industry is very | profitable | marginal |.

**3) Read about the history and background of the bottled water industry. Then match the words with the synonyms.**

### ***History and background***

In the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, bottled water was very unusual in Britain. Only two 'special' sparkling waters were sold: 'tonic water', which contained quinine and some sugar, and 'soda water' which contained some mineral salts. Tonic water was drunk with gin. Soda water was drunk with whisky.

As the British started to travel in mainland Europe they discovered the bottled water habit. In many European countries 'tap water' was for cooking, bathing and washing clothes. It was not clean enough for drinking. In many cities, British tourists could see 'water houses' where the local people would come to collect drinkable water. As well as the ordinary drinkable water from water houses, many people bought bottled mineral water from spas.

Mineral water is just plain H<sub>2</sub>O which comes from natural springs. In some places, the local geology means that the water passes through rocks and small quantities of mineral salts are dissolved in the water. These mineral salts may make the water beneficial for digestion and they may also give the water a pleasing taste.

The English word spa, comes from the city of Spa, near Liege in Belgium. Since the time of the Roman occupation of Britain, there had been places in Britain which were famous for their natural mineral waters. The names of cities like Tunbridge Wells, Leamington Spa and Bath, indicate their origins as places with special water. Some water was for drinking and some water was for bathing.

British tourists in Europe brought back the fashion for continental bottled water like Evian, Perrier, San Pellegrino. These were natural spring waters which were bottled at source. The success of these imported mineral waters led to increased sales of bottled water from British spas such as Malvern.

The powerful American manufacturers of sweetened flavoured drinks have recognised and adapted to this trend. Both PepsiCo and Coca-Cola produces their own versions of traditional mineral waters. PepsiCo produce Aquafina and Coca-Cola produce Dasani.

a) unusual	1. travellers
b) tourists	2. diffused
c) springs	3. flavour
d) dissolved	4. fashion
e) taste	5. foreign
f) imported	6. changed
g) trend	7. rare
h) adapted	8. variants
i) versions	9. wells

**4) Read the last part of the text about marketing bottled water. Find the correct way to complete each sentence.**

### ***Marketing bottled water***

It may seem difficult to persuade people to buy a product which regularly falls (without charge) from clouds in the sky, or is purified and piped to people's homes virtually free of charge, but sellers of bottled water have been remarkably successful. They have achieved remarkable results by suggesting that the natural product is unsafe, or unhealthy. At the same time, they have suggested that their products carry health benefits and most importantly style.

The water bottlers are aware that scientific authorities worldwide deny their suggestions that piped water is less healthy than bottled water. They have responded by persuading scientists to analyse their products and write about the benefits which they offer consumers.

a) It is difficult	1. is pure and costs practically nothing.
b) Bottled water sellers	2. believe that bottled water is better than tap water.
c) Tap water	3. to get pure drinkable water.
d) Many people	4. is very fashionable.
e) Scientific authorities	5. have convinced people to buy their product.
f) Scientists, working	6. is more expensive than bottled water.
	7. to convince people to pay for something which is available free.
	8. at universities have said rainwater is dirty.
	9. don't want people to drink bottled water.
	10. for the water bottling industry have emphasised the benefits of bottled water.
	11. say tap water is too expensive.
	12. say tap water is as healthy as bottled water.

### 5) Discuss

- a) Do you think some mineral waters are healthier than others?
- b) Do you believe the advertising from water bottlers?
- c) Is tap water safe to drink in all countries?
- d) Do you think it is right to put stannous fluoride into tap water?
- e) What would be a reasonable price for a litre of mineral water?
- f) Do you always think about value for money?