

## Tip Strip

**Question 37:** Reviewer A describes the book as 'engaging' and talks about 'the upbeat tone'. Which reviewer uses less positive language to talk about the style of writing?

**Question 38:** Look for the reference in Extract B to the main focus of the book. Which reviewer disagrees with Reviewer B's opinion about this?

**Question 40:** Underline the sentences in each review that talk about people in different parts of the world. Which reviewer feels that Allen's ideas may not apply in some cultures?

You are going to read four extracts from reviews of a book about the history of food. For questions 37–40, choose from the extracts A–D. The extracts may be chosen more than once.

## The Omnivorous Mind

*Four reviews of the book by John S Allen*

### A

To quote John S Allen in his engaging book *The Omnivorous Mind*, 'We eat with our brains.' After this enticing assertion, Allen takes us on a fast-paced tour of world history to illustrate his point. As a neuroscientist, Allen has done extensive research into the relationship between the way we think and what we choose to eat. Indeed, the main ideas in the book will strike a chord with people around the globe, even if the detailed examples are outside their experience. Allen's principle point is that the mind has always been central in determining people's eating habits, and it's a point he returns to regularly, whether in the context of the latest fads and fashions or deeply-seated cultural traditions. Another appealing feature of the book is the upbeat tone and feeling of optimism that prevails throughout. Allen covers a lot of ground, and raises some important questions, but never gets bogged down in technicalities.

### B

The human species has a very complex relationship with food. In any human society, diet is very much a key part of what makes us who we are. Why is it, Allen asks, that in every society there are certain perfectly palatable foods that people refuse to eat? Allen goes on to explore the reasons for this, and other conventions, in a way that will be accessible across cultures. The book is a thoughtful, authoritative guide to a vast and fascinating subject, touching on such issues as how food affects memory and language, and the ways foods are categorised. But it begins rather slowly, and there are moments when the casual reader will want to skip some of the long-winded explanations to get to the point. Allen often strays far from his main contention, so anyone looking for a clear focus on food may find their attention wandering.

### C

Eating is so much part of our daily routine that few of us stop to think about its true social significance. John S Allen's new book takes a close look at how food forms part of our biological and cultural heritage. Allen sees this cerebral relationship with food as contributing to our uniqueness as a species, and explains why the world's cultures are so diverse in terms of their culinary traditions. Bringing together the work of food historians, anthropologists and neuroscientists, his lively narrative takes us from the diet of our earliest ancestors all the way through to modern attitudes. Even people from quite diverse cultural contexts will find familiar issues investigated along the way. *The Omnivorous Mind* examines the foods we crave and the foods we find repulsive, and our insistence on classifying all food as healthy or unhealthy. This book certainly challenges some of our preconceptions and attitudes towards eating.

### D

According to Allen, the modern world presents us with complex decisions to make on a daily basis about what to eat and what not to eat. Allen eloquently describes the internal 'food model', which each of us develops to help us decide what to eat and what not to eat. Allen, however, is clearly writing for those of us living in places where food abundance is the norm rather than shortage, and this detracts from some of his broader claims about our species' relationship with what we eat. It is hard to know what people in less fortunate societies might make of them. What he does do, however, is show us that although we spend a lot of time thinking about food, there is still a great deal we don't know about our relationship with it. This book is going to help change that!

## Which reviewer

doesn't share Reviewer A's opinion about Allen's style of writing?

37

disagrees with Reviewer B's point about how relevant some sections of the book are to Allen's main argument?

38

agrees with Reviewer D's point about the likely impact the book will have on readers?

39

presents a different argument to the others regarding the extent to which Allen's ideas will be understood in different parts of the world?

40