

Fast food fingertip mystery (Sat 9 Apr, 2005)

WARM-UPS / POST-READING ACTIVITIES

CHAT: Talk in pairs or groups about: fingers / Wendy's / fast food / chili con carne / big questions / hoaxes / mud / hiring lawyers.

For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

FINGER BRAINSTORM: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "finger". Share your words with your partner / group and talk about them.

URBAN LEGENDS: An urban legend is a crazy, made-up story that quickly spreads in the media and is believed by many people. In pairs / groups, talk about any urban legends that exist in your cultures / countries. Change partners and share what you heard.

FOOD SAFETY: Are you always entirely satisfied that the food you eat in restaurants is safe to eat? Have you ever found a dead insect, hair or other foreign object in your food? Have you been to a restaurant full of rats or cockroaches? Have you ever had food poisoning? In pairs / groups, talk about any experiences you have had or heard about involving food or restaurants that were not so safe.

OPINIONS: Talk about the following opinions based on the news article.

- a. McDonald's is the best fast food restaurant.
- b. Chili con carne is the tastiest option on the fast food menu.
- c. The tip of your thumb is more useful than the tip of your index finger.
- d. Some people would sell their own grandmothers to get money.
- e. Fast food restaurants' kitchens are cleaner than those of expensive restaurants.
- f. We don't really need fingernails.
- g. The police never treat people like animals.
- h. The media never drag people through the mud.
- i. Lawyers are important.
- j. DNA testing is a wonderful thing.

'THE BIG QUESTION': Write down the biggest "big question" you have about life or fingertips. Walk around the classroom asking your big question to other students.

PRE-READING IDEAS

WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... of the words 'human' and 'finger'.

TRUE FALSE: Guess whether the following statements about the article are true or false:

- a) A fingertip was left on the table of an American fast food restaurant. T / F
- b) The fingertip was from a foreigner. T / F
- c) The restaurant employees questioned all of the customers. T / F
- d) The restaurant is offering a \$50,000 reward for information on the fingertip. T / F
- e) The fingertip in the restaurant may be a hoax. T / F
- f) The fingertip may be from someone's dead aunt. T / F
- g) The lady who found the fingertip is now covered in mud. T / F
- h) Police pointed a gun at the head of the lady who found the fingertip. T / F

SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------|
| (a) allegedly | unmistakable |
| (b) chewing | ascertain |
| (c) foreign | continuing |
| (d) verifiable | chomping |
| (e) originate | hinted |
| (f) ongoing | sex |
| (g) hoax | supposedly |
| (h) intimidated | alien |
| (i) determine | trick |
| (j) gender | emanate |

PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article:

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| (a) a woman who allegedly | object |
| (b) suddenly | investigation |
| (c) foreign | question |
| (d) big | hoax |
| (e) verifiable | found part of a human finger |
| (f) ongoing | through the mud |
| (g) it is all a | like animals |
| (h) dragged | realized |
| (i) treated | examiners |
| (j) medical | information |

GAP FILL

Fast food fingertip mystery

BNE: Police in California have _____ the home of a woman who allegedly found part of a human finger in her meal bought from a Wendy's fast food restaurant. Anna Ayala, 39, _____ she was eating a bowl of chili con carne at Wendy's on March 22 when she suddenly realized she was chewing on a _____ object. It turned out to be a one-and-a-half centimeter long tip of a human finger. The big question is how it got into the chili. Wendy's has questioned all of its employees and none of them has _____ any accidents involving lost fingertips. The restaurant chain has offered a \$50,000 reward for anyone providing verifiable information leading to the origin of the fingertip. A spokesman said he is _____ it did not originate from the restaurant.

claims
confident
foreign
searched
reported

The search of Ms. Ayala's home is part of an _____ investigation into the case. There is now a suggestion that it is all a _____ and that Ayala planted the fingertip to get Wendy's to pay her _____. Her son intimated that the police search was because the fingertip may have come from his mother's dead aunt. Ayala is deeply upset by the seven-hour search of her home: "I've been dragged through the mud. We've been treated like _____." She has accused police of "destroying" her home and of pointing a gun at her head. Medical examiners are conducting DNA tests on the fingertip to determine the race and gender of its _____ owner. The latest report is that Ayala has hired a lawyer.

former
compensation
hoax
animals
ongoing

HOMEWORK

- 1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.
- 2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find information on urban legends. Share your findings with your class next lesson.
- 3. WENDY'S LAWYER:** Imagine you are a lawyer defending Wendy's. Write down at least five questions you want to ask Ms. Ayala about her allegations of fingertips in Wendy's food. Ask the questions in a court case role play in your next class.
- 4. FINGERTIPS:** Write a short article titled "Ten uses for fingertips". Talk about your article in your next class

DISCUSSION:

- a. What was interesting in this article?
- b. Were you surprised by anything in this article?
- c. Were you suspicious about anything in this article?
- d. What do you think of Ayala's story?
- e. Do you think anyone will claim the \$50,000 reward?
- f. Do you like chili con carne?
- g. Do you know any scary restaurant stories?
- h. Why do you think the police searched Ayala's home?
- i. What reasons can you think of for the fingertip being found in the chili?
- j. Do you know of any hoaxes?
- k. Have you ever complained in a restaurant?
- l. Do you have any big questions in your head?
- m. How long / How many times do you chew your food before swallowing?
- n. Have you ever injured your hands / fingers?
- o. Have you ever claimed or received compensation?
- p. Has your name ever been unfairly dragged through the mud?
- q. Have you ever been treated like an animal?
- r. What do you think will be the conclusion of the fingertip mystery?
- s. Did you like this discussion?
- t. Teacher / Student additional questions.

TEXT

Fast food fingertip mystery

BNE: Police in California have **searched** the home of a woman who allegedly found part of a human finger in her meal bought from a Wendy's fast food restaurant. Anna Ayala, 39, **claims** she was eating a bowl of chili con carne at Wendy's on March 22 when she suddenly realized she was chewing on a **foreign** object. It turned out to be a one-and-a-half centimeter long tip of a human finger. The big question is how it got into the chili. Wendy's has questioned all of its employees and none of them has **reported** any accidents involving lost fingertips. The restaurant chain has offered a \$50,000 reward for anyone providing verifiable information leading to the origin of the fingertip. A spokesman said he is **confident** it did not originate from the restaurant.

The search of Ms. Ayala's home is part of an **ongoing** investigation into the case. There is now a suggestion that it is all a **hoax** and that Ayala planted the fingertip to get Wendy's to pay her **compensation**. Her son intimated that the police search was because the fingertip may have come from his mother's dead aunt. Ayala is deeply upset by the seven-hour search of her home: "I've been dragged through the mud. We've been treated like **animals**." She has accused police of "destroying" her home and of pointing a gun at her head. Medical examiners are conducting DNA tests on the fingertip to determine the race and gender of its **former** owner. The latest report is that Ayala has hired a lawyer.