



READING

Sample Problems

Caveman Notes

Legend has it that coffee was first discovered in Ethiopia when a goat herder ate some berries that seemed to make his goats surprisingly energetic. Sometime around 1000 AD, people in Arabia began to use the coffee bean to brew a drink. One thousand years later, coffee is not just a beverage—it is a worldwide cultural and economic institution. Picture the more than 21,000 Starbucks locations worldwide as evidence. Or consider the fact that coffee is the lead export of 12 different countries. Or simply consider this staggering fact: humans consume four hundred billion cups of coffee annually, making it the most popular beverage in the world behind water.

The popularity of coffee has much to do with an alkaloid crystalline compound commonly known as caffeine. During the millennia that humans have consumed coffee and tea, the caffeine found in these plant-based beverages has been utilized to increase alertness in the morning or enhance productivity throughout the day. The eye-opening power of coffee is so well known that it's a cliché—mugs with cute sayings like “I don’t start working until my coffee does,” and television characters who seem to spend half their lives inside of coffee shops attest to that. It’s almost enough to make you think that coffee’s appeal is limited to its caffeine content. The question arises: are coffee and caffeine inseparable?