Tap vs. Bottle

Every year, people in the U.S. use about 50 billion bottles of water, most of which are not recycled. Transporting the bottles and keeping them cold burns fossil fuels, which adds to global air pollution. According to one environmental organization, the bottled water industry is also responsible for draining underground water sources and harming rivers. It is such a successful industry, however, that bottled water sells more than milk, coffee, and juice.

In many developing countries where there is no safe source of tap water, bottled water may be the only option. But in countries where tap water is regulated and often screened for purity, the public still drinks bottled water. The average American, for example, drinks 79 liters (21 gallons) of bottled water a year.

Water Bottle Bans

Though the sale and use of bottled water is still growing, some governments and local activists have taken steps to reduce it. In September 2009, the Australian city of Bundanoon became the first city in the world to completely **ban** bottled water from it stores, installing water fountains instead. Cities in Canada and the United Kingdom soon followed. In some cities in France and Italy, only tap water in glass containers is allowed at official events and meetings. Among U.S. cities that have taken action are San Francisco and Seattle, which no longer buy bottled water for city use.

In 2012, Concord, Massachusetts, became one of the first towns in the U.S. to ban the sale of bottled water. The local law made it illegal to sell water in plastic bottles that hold less than 1 liter (a little more than a third of a gallon). Supporters of the law said that the ban would not only cut down on plastic pollution but would also protect people from the toxic chemicals in some types of bottles.

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Health Concerns

Many reusable bottles are made of a plastic that contains bisphenol A (BPA). This chemical is linked to reproductive problems and heart disease. Polyethylene terephthalate (PET or PETE) is another common chemical used in bottles. It's safe if the bottles are used only once, but if the bottles are reused, which they often are, they can release chemicals such as DEHA, which may cause cancer. And because the plastic is **porous**, you might get a mouthful of harmful **bacteria** if you reuse the bottles. In addition, a 2008 investigation found that some bottled water may not necessarily be cleaner than tap water.

Another major problem with water in plastic bottles is that bottled water companies earn high profits by taking water from public water sources, putting it in plastic bottles, and then selling it at 2,900 times the price of regular tap water. Some experts say that bottled water companies should spend some of this money on improving public water supplies and infrastructure—making better water for everyone.

* **Ban:** create a rule or law to prevent people from using something. **Porous:** full of very small holes that allow liquid or gas to pass through. **Bacteria:** small living organisms that may cause disease.

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A. Choose the best answer.

_number of water bottles used in the U.S. each year

—volume of bottled water consumed per person in the U.S. each year

—year that Bundanoon banned the sale of bottled water

—year that Concord banned the sale of bottled water

—minimum volume of bottled water that can be sold in Concord, Massachusetts

—number by which the price of tap water is multiplied when sold in bottles

B. Choose the best answer.

1. The reading's title uses the abbreviation "vs." for the latin "versus," which means ____.
2. Bottled water is an important option in ____.
3. Bundanoon replaced bottled water with ____
4. The chemical bisphenol A (BPA) has been linked to ____ disease.
5. The porous nature of the plastic used to make water bottles encourages the growth of ____.
6. Besides pollution, a drawback of bottled water is that the industry takes water from ____.

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