

TEXT C: NON-FICTION

This is an extract from an article describing how the tobacco industry is harmful to young people.

Where there is Smoke there is Fire

Mark takes a drag on his cigarette and the tip flares momentarily between his fingers. "Aaaah," he sighs. The relief is instant as his body eagerly receives its nicotine hit. It is freezing, with a sharp wind sweeping in from Wellington's harbour, but he and the other teen smokers brave the cold for the long-awaited lunchtime smoke break. Sucking back over 4 000 chemicals with every drag, Mark is inhaling products that can be found in floor cleaner (ammonia), car batteries (cadmium), and rocket fuel (methanol). With his every inhalation, Mark's life expectancy is being cut shorter and shorter. Smoking is killing him. 5

He isn't the only one—far from it. More than one billion people smoke on a daily basis and around 80 000 to 100 000 children under the age of 18 start smoking every day. Tobacco use kills 5.4 million people a year, and this number is increasing. 10

Sadly, smokers aren't the only victims of the powerful international tobacco industry known as 'Big Tobacco'. As Mark slowly burns his life away, a child who may have picked the tobacco leaves that are in Mark's cigarette is also being slowly poisoned by nicotine.

As in most areas of agriculture in the developing world, child labour is common in the growing of tobacco. Children, often working alongside their families, are used in many areas of production such as sowing new seedlings, fertilising and watering crops, weeding, and plucking tobacco leaves. 15

In Malawi, the world's fifth-largest producer of tobacco, children working in tobacco fields are expected to work from first light until dark. Moisture on the tobacco leaves, left by the humid weather, causes nicotine to be easily absorbed into their skin, and the threat of nicotine poisoning—otherwise known as green tobacco sickness—is a daily concern. These children are exposed to the equivalent of 50 cigarettes a day. They experience nausea, headaches, stomach pain, and breathlessness. No one knows yet what the long-term effects will be. 20

Whether they are working in the tobacco fields or buying cigarettes in the market place, young people are at risk of falling victim to the poisonous influence of Big Tobacco. 25

Glossed word

inhale breathe in

Source (adapted): Madeline McIntyre, 'Where there is Smoke there is Fire', <http://www.justfocus.org.nz/2010/05/where-there-is-smoke-there-is-fire/> (accessed 17 November, 2010).