

The Noughties

The first decade of the 21st century, the 'noughties', is over. It is a time to look back, at both the highs and the lows. How has the world changed in the last ten years?

Many were afraid at the start of the new decade: the Millennium bug, which some experts believed would cause computers to crash and cause general chaos, never actually happened. The world did not end, but went on as normal.

The following year, The World Trade Centre in New York was destroyed, killing around 3000 people. Millions watched this dramatic event on their TV screens. This was followed by the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq by the US and then by more terrorist attacks, for example in Bali, Madrid, London and Mumbai.

Concern about climate change also grew in the last decade, becoming a problem for many communities all over the world. Significantly, this decade ended with the *United Nations Climate Change Conference* in Copenhagen, when representatives from all countries – small and large, rich and poor – discussed how to protect the environment.

Importantly, the new American government accepted the responsibility of the US to help fight global warming. The election of the first black President in America, Barack Obama, in November 2008 also brought great hope to those people wanting a world without prejudice.

This decade also saw the birth and growth of two new world economies, China and India, making these countries much richer. In addition, particularly in China, this led to greater openness and freedom for the people in some areas of their lives.

As the noughties drew to a close, there was a global recession. This affected and still affects many economies and touched the lives of countless people as they tried to survive on less money. For some, the recession and global environmental problems taught them to think about how to reduce waste in their throwaway societies.

This was the decade of telecommunications, when news could be *given* and shared by us as individuals, not just *received* from large media corporations, using social networking sites such as *Facebook* and *Twitter*.

Finally, this decade also witnessed the explosion of the Harry Potter phenomenon. Although the first Harry Potter book was published in 1997, the other four books in the series of seven were published in the noughties and became a global phenomenon in this period.

Who knows what literary, historical and geographical events will shape the next ten years; what political and environmental issues will affect our countries?

Exercise 1

Answer the questions.

- 1 Did you think of the same events?
- 2 Does the writer of the article think that the decade was: a) positive b) negative c) mixed?

Exercise 2

Match the words with their definitions.

1 climate (n)	a a negative feeling or opinion which is often unfair, especially the feeling of not liking a particular group of people, maybe because of their culture or skin colour
2 concern (n)	b something that is very surprising or impressive
3 invasion (n)	c the type of weather a country or region has
4 phenomenon (n)	d when one country's army goes into another country to take control
5 prejudice (n)	e the science and technology of sending information by telephone, radio, TV, etc
6 telecommunications(n)	f a feeling of worry, or something that worries you

Exercise 3

Read the text again and answer the following questions:

- 1 What did people think might happen at the start of the decade?
- 2 Which event happened in Copenhagen and why was it important?
- 3 What came after the New York terrorist attack (9/11)?
- 4 How are people's lives affected by a recession directly?
- 5 In what way was the decade a positive one for China?
- 6 How are social networking sites changing the idea of 'news'?
- 7 For which two reasons was the election of Obama so important?