

Reading e-lesson

Week starting: 18 January 2010

The Big Freeze

This week's lesson looks at the unusual weather conditions of recent weeks (late December '09 and January '10).

Level

Pre-intermediate and above (equivalent to CEF level A2-B1 and above)

How to use the lesson

- 1 If possible, show some visuals or even a short video clip of the bad weather conditions. A good source of news items is to go to the BBC website and use the keywords: *bad weather January*, or see *Related websites* below. Of course, if you too were affected by the bad weather, personal photos or more local pictures from newspapers or the internet would also work. Ask students which other countries were affected, eliciting examples of countries and, if possible, of events.
- 2 Students read the text and complete Exercise 1. As this is a scan reading exercise, allow just two minutes for this task.
- 3 Show students the Glossary on page 3. Students then complete the comprehension matching task, Exercise 2. Let students compare their answers before taking whole class feedback.
- 4 Give students a few minutes to think about the answers to Exercise 3. Get students to compare their answers in threes before class feedback.
- 5 Exercise 4 encourages students to look at collocations on the topic. Write the following on the board:

<i>huge amounts</i>	<i>warm clothes</i>	<i>dramatic increase</i>
<i>severe problems</i>	<i>weather conditions</i>	<i>badly hit</i>

 Stronger students could tackle the exercise without the options, at least at first. However, if you do this, be prepared to accept their own collocations, which might be different from the text, but nevertheless valid.
- 5 To round off the lesson, you could show another video clip of the cold weather snap (see *Related websites* below), or get students to come and point out the countries on a globe or map.

Answers:

Exercise 1

14 (England, Scotland, Germany, Poland, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the US, China, South Korea, Japan, Canada, Australia)

Exercise 2

Energy needs grew by one third *Britain*

Fruit harvests were badly affected and animals suffered *Florida*

The warmest night in over a century *South Eastern Australia*

They recorded the biggest snowfall ever *South Korea*

They had very mild weather over the same period *Canada/Spain*

-30 to -40 Celsius *Norway and Sweden*

Local people cleared snow from the streets *China*

Exercise 3

- What caused this strangely cold weather in many parts of the world?
 - Cold air coming down from the Arctic, instead of the usual warmer air coming across the Atlantic.
- Is this evidence that global warming is not happening?
 - Experts think not and remind us that *weather* is not the same as *climate* which is the pattern of weather over many years.
- What are the two most interesting or surprising pieces of information in the text?
 - Students' own answers.

Exercise 4

- 1 severe problems
- 2 badly hit
- 3 huge amounts
- 4 dramatic increase
- 5 weather conditions
- 6 warm clothes

Related websites

The following websites might be useful, for either yourself or your students.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/8445613.stm> (including useful video links)

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/8423442.stm>

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=earthtalks-global-warming-harsher-winter> ok

<http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/2010/0109/Snow-in-Florida-Big-chill-culling-unwanted-iguanas-and-pythons>

<http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/?report=hazards>

http://article.wn.com/view/2010/01/07/Scientists_Cold_snap_no_reason_to_doubt_global_warming/